Hafa Adai!

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CNMI gets $1M grant through America the Beautiful Challenge. PAGE 2

CNMI BPD Office awarded $2.1M to advance digital equity. PAGE 3

CITING AN UNPAID BALANCE

CPA gives Star Marianas 30 days to vacate Tinian hangar

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority has denied Star Marianas Air, Inc.'s request to extend its commercial use permit for its Tinian hangar and has given Star Marianas 30 days to vacate the premises.

See CPA on Page 4

COR lease signing hits snag

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The lease signing officiating Suwaso Corp. dba Coral Ocean Resort's new land lease agreement with the Department of Public Lands was cancelled last Friday due to issues that remain unresolved.

Last Friday, Coral Ocean

See COR on Page 4

Palacios

RACQUEL FLOYD

Professor Dr. Thomas Stolz, left, made a presentation during the Northern Marianas Humanities Council lecture series last Tuesday night at the American Memorial Park. He was joined by Dr. Nataliya Levkovych, a postdoctoral researcher at the linguistics department of the University of Breman.

Lecture emphasizes importance of places' names in the understanding of heritage

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
raxfloyd@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Research on names of places in the Marianas is ongoing, with efforts to identify missing names of places in Gani Islands (Northern Islands) through collaboration and repeated island visits by University of Breman linguistics professor Dr. Thomas Stolz.

Stolz made a presentation during a Northern Marianas Humanities Council lecture series last Tuesday night at the American Memorial Park

See HERITAGE on Page 4

$10K bail placed on woman after biting, robbing shopkeeper

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

A woman accused of robbing a shopkeeper at the Full House Gift Shop in Garapan stood before the NMI Superior Court in Susupe yesterday for her bail hearing.

The court, with Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho presiding, placed a $10,000 cash bail on Jolanie Katrina Cepeda Tenorio for her actions. The 36-year-old is

See $10K on Page 4

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Jolanie Tenorio is escorted to her bail hearing yesterday at the Superior Court in Susupe.

INSIDE

BUSINES

President-elect Donald Trump is promising expedited federal permits for energy projects and other construction worth more than $1 billion.

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NATION

Americans should eat more beans, peas and lentils and cut back on red and processed meats and starchy vegetables, all while continuing to limit added sugars, sodium and saturated fat.

PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE

While surveying a room packed with Hollywood's most influential figures, "Emilia Pérez" star Selena Gomez took center stage to spotlight a critical issue: Prioritizing mental health and supporting underserved communities often left behind in the conversation.

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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

CNMI gets $1M grant through America the Beautiful Challenge

The Office of the Governor of the CNMI is honored to announce the receipt of a $1-million grant through the America the Beautiful Challenge. This award, made possible by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, reflects a shared commitment to preserving and protecting our environment. The project is entitled, "Building Capacity for Inter-Island Resilience in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

This transformative funding will support vital restoration efforts to safeguard natural habitats, protect biodiversity, and sustain the rich ecological and cultural heritage of the islands. In alignment with this mission, the projects will incorporate Indigenous traditional knowledge, ensuring our conservation strategies honor the wisdom and practices passed down through generations.

"The natural beauty of the Northern Mariana Islands is a treasure we must protect for future generations," said Gov. Arnold I. Palacios. "This grant not only allows us to restore critical ecosystems but also empowers us to do so by embracing the knowledge and traditions of our indigenous people. Together with our federal partners and community stakeholders, we are committed to making meaningful progress in conservation and sustainability."

The Commonwealth is proud to stand alongside 42 states, 19 tribal nations, and three U.S. territories participating in this nationwide initiative. The America the Beautiful Challenge highlights the power of collaboration in addressing climate change and environmental challenges on a global scale.

"As dedicated stewards of the islands, we pledge to use these resources responsibly, working transparently and inclusively with community stakeholders, local experts, and federal partners. Together, we will make significant strides in conservation and ensure that the natural beauty and bounty of the Northern Mariana Islands endure for future generations," added Palacios.

The project has four primary outcomes that focus on the restoration of native medicinal plants, community engagement, and the promotion of ecotourism between four municipalities within the Marianas archipelago. These outcomes will address urgent environmental issues while preserving traditional practices that have been passed down for generations.

The grant was written by the Office of Grants Management and State Clearinghouse through collaborative partnership of the four municipality mayors, department and division leadership, and the Office of the Governor. The grant will be administered by the OGM-SC and is expected to commence by March 2025.

Palacios further extends his deepest gratitude to all partners involved for their commitment to safeguarding our shared environment.

The NFWF 2024 year-round funding awarded 61 new grants totaling $122.4 million. More information could be obtained by the following URL: https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/NFWF-ATBC-20241113-GS.pdf. ***(PR)***

Marianas Beach Resort Saipan
Formerly the Hyatt Regency Hotel
$99
+15% Tax
Spend your holidays at home
with our welcome back specials
Ocean View Room Special For up to 2 Local Residents
Add $10 for breakfast for up to 2 persons!
Add $10 for free flowing 2 hours happy hour for up to 2 persons!
• Promotion for CNMI local residents only, Valid ID required. Some restrictions apply.
• Promotion valid until Feb 2025 excluding Dec. 26, 2024 to Jan. 4, 2025, Jan 27 to Feb 2, 2025
• Early check-in & late check-out upon availability.
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$10
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Experience the finest Japanese Buffet on the island!
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11AM - 2:30PM | AD $45 / CH $22.5
DINNER - EVERY FRI & SAT ONLY
FROM 6PM - 9PM | AD $55 / CH $27.5
GIOVANNI'S
15%OFF
ENJOY BRUNCH, GET POOL PASS!
11AM - 2PM
AD $60 / CH $30
SKIPPER'S
Reopening
LIVE MUSIC EVERY FRI & SAT
FROM WED TO SUN | 4-8PM
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Tel: (670) 234-6245/6293/7145/7146 • Fax: (670) 235-7147
www.developcnmi.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Thursday, December 12, 2024

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CEDA) THRU ITS CHAIRMAN, HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE CEDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2024, AT 1:30 P.M. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CEDA CONFERENCE ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CEDA BUILDING, OLEAI SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
   A. Call to Order
   B. Roll Call
   C. Adoption of Agenda
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
III. QUALIFYING CERTIFICATE (QC) PROGRAM **(Board Action)**
   A. Review and Deliberation of the application for a QC by J&P Holdings CNMI LLC
IV, EXECUTIVE SESSION
V. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/
FRANCISCO M. RABAULIMAN
Chairman, Board of Directors

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP25-CHCC/CGC-002

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JANUARY 13TH, 2025 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"TINIAN OFFICE LEASE"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL** FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

CNMI BPD Office awarded $2.1M to advance digital equity

The CNMI Broadband Policy & Development Office, under the Office of the Governor, is proud to announce the award of $2.1 million from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. This funding will propel the Commonwealth's ongoing efforts to ensure every resident has access to affordable broadband, digital skills training, and the tools necessary to thrive in today's digital economy.

Created and funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Digital Equity Act provides $2.75 billion to promote digital equity and inclusion across the United States and its territories. The NTIA's State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, which launched in March 2024 with $1.44 billion, marks the second phase of this initiative. These grants empower states and territories to implement their digital equity plans, following the success of the initial $60 million State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program in 2022. The CNMI submitted its Digital Equity Plan on May 31, 2024, which received NTIA approval on June 21, 2024. With this funding, the CNMI will now execute its plan to bridge the digital divide.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios emphasized the significance of this milestone, stating:

"The approval and recommended award of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant is another step forward in our commitment to providing the people of the CNMI with equal opportunities in education, employment, and overall connectivity. This investment reaffirms our mission to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age."

The $2.1 million grant will enable the CNMI to advance a variety of initiatives aimed at fostering digital inclusion and promoting equitable access to technology. These efforts will focus on ensuring that all residents, especially those in need, can fully participate in the digital economy and access vital opportunities for growth and development. This funding will support activities that strengthen community connectivity and empower individuals to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

The CNMI Broadband Policy & Development Office, under the Office of the Governor, is proud to announce that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), through its Digital Equity Capacity Grant, has awarded the CNMI
$2,100,000
in New Internet for All Funding to increase Digital Inclusion Efforts.
BPD BROADBAND POLICY & DEVELOPMENT

The CNMI BPD Office thanks the NTIA, the Office of the Governor, and all federal and local partners for their continued collaboration and support. This partnership underscores a shared commitment to transforming the CNMI into a model of digital equity and resilience in the Pacific.

For more information on the CNMI's digital equity initiatives, email cnmi.bpd@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

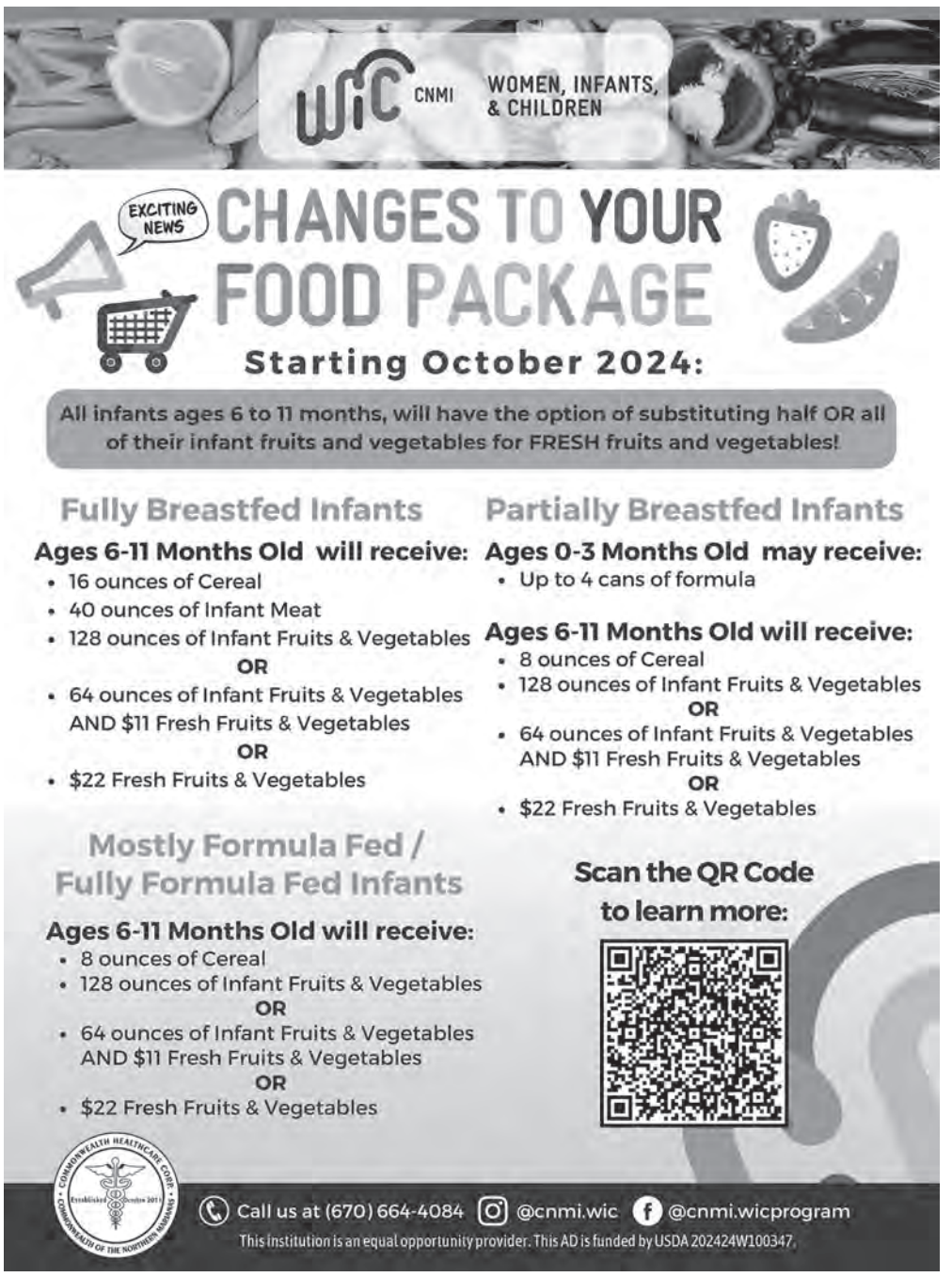
Scheduled power service interruption for Tinian on Dec. 13

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public that there will be a scheduled power service interruption on Tinian this Friday, Dec.13, 2024. See additional information below:

Friday, Dec. 13, 2024

- Power Service Interruption Time: 9am-11am.
- Area(s) Affected: Feeder 2 and Feeder 3 (San Jose and subdivision areas)
- Water Well(s) Affected: None
- Purpose: To allow the CUC line crew to replace a transformer on the power distribution system.

CUC appreciates the public's cooperation and understanding as it works to ensure reliable service for our customers. For more information, contact the CUC Tinian Office at (670) 433-9265 or 433-9200, visit its website, and monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates. In case of an emergency, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. ***(PR)***


WIC CNMI WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN
EXCITING NEWS
CHANGES TO YOUR FOOD PACKAGE
Starting October 2024:
All infants ages 6 to 11 months, will have the option of substituting half OR all of their infant fruits and vegetables for FRESH fruits and vegetables!
Fully Breastfed Infants
Ages 6-11 Months Old will receive:
• 16 ounces of Cereal
• 40 ounces of Infant Meat
• 128 ounces of Infant Fruits & Vegetables
OR
• 64 ounces of Infant Fruits & Vegetables AND $11 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
OR
• $22 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Partially Breastfed Infants
Ages 0-3 Months Old may receive:
• Up to 4 cans of formula
Ages 6-11 Months Old will receive:
• 8 ounces of Cereal
• 128 ounces of Infant Fruits & Vegetables
OR
• 64 ounces of Infant Fruits & Vegetables AND $11 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
OR
• $22 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Mostly Formula Fed / Fully Formula Fed Infants
Ages 6-11 Months Old will receive:
• 8 ounces of Cereal
• 128 ounces of Infant Fruits & Vegetables
OR
• 64 ounces of Infant Fruits & Vegetables AND $11 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
OR
• $22 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Scan the QR Code to learn more:
Call us at (670) 664-4084 @cnmi.wic @cnmi.wicprogram
This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This AD is funded by USDA 202424W100347.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-25-002

KAGMAN WATER TANK REPLACEMENT AND BOOSTER PUMP STATION UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the Kagman Water Tank Replacement and Booster Pump Station Upgrade in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of demolition of the existing water tank, booster pumps, yard piping, and all other appurtenances; construction of a new 70,000-gallon cast-in-place circular concrete water tank; removal of the temporary modular tank; construction of new generator building; installation of new generator equipment, flow meter stations, triplex pitless booster pump system, telemetry and controls; reconnection of existing waterlines; electrical works; site improvements; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the project plans and specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the US Public Law 117-2 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **four hundred twenty (420) calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 5, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-25-002, Kagman Water Tank Replacement and Booster Pump Station Upgrade**", to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 12, 2024** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Alley Reyes, Engineer, Water & Wastewater – via email at alley.reyes@cucgov-.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Administrative Technichian Senior – via email at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Star Marianas refiles complaint against Southern Airways

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Star Marianas Air Inc. has refiled its complaint against Southern Airways Express LLC, Marianas Pacific Express LLC dba Marianas Southern Airways, and Keith Stewart with the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

Last week, Star Marianas Air, through attorney Mark Scoggins, refiled its complaint against Southern Airways Express, Marianas Pacific Express dba Marianas Southern Airways, and its operator Keith Stewart.

Last month, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona granted Southern Airways Express' motion for dismissal of Star Marianas Air's suit for failure to join a necessary and indispensable party under Rule (19).

However, the court denied the motion for dismissal pursuant to arguments related to the Sherman Act.

In its refiled complaint, just like the first, Star Marianas has filed six counts of violations of the Sherman Act against Marianas Southern Airways pursuant to an $8-million sole source contract between the airline and the CNMI government under the previous administration.

The Sherman Act aims to increase economic competitiveness by outlawing trusts, monopolies, and cartels.

As relief, Star Marianas is asking the District Court to award them damages in an amount to be determined at trial, and other relief the court may find just and proper.

According to the lawsuit, on March 21, 2022, Marianas Southern Airways executed a sole-source contract with the CNMI government for receipt of federal funds through the American Rescue Plan Act in the amount of $8 million.

Marianas Southern Airways accepted a sole-source procurement services contract from then-secretary of Finance David DLG Atalig.

Beginning August 2022 until April 2023, Marianas Southern Airways existed as the main competitor to Star Marianas in the CNMI.

Star Marianas said at the time, it was the primary provider of commercial passenger flight travel between Saipan, Rota, and Tinian.

"Marianas Southern Airways, by executing said contract, entered into a predatory pricing scheme with the other defendants, to use ARPA funding to fix prices below costs in the markets served by Star Marianas with the intent of causing injury to Star Marianas's business, and with the goal of running Star Marianas out of its free market business," the lawsuit stated.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

HERITAGE

From page 1

where he shared a quote from the book *Cultural Landscape* to highlight the significance of names in understanding culture and heritage.

"Our ancestors left us clues in everything, in their names, the names of people, places, and things. History is there. We, today just have to learn it well enough to kind of crack the code of our ancestors to understand exactly what it is they are trying to tell us, and this is what it is all about," said Stolz.

The lecture focused on the case study of the Gani Islands, which started with Alamagan wherein a discussion on the absence of places on maps was included.

The professor explained the absence of place names on the official map of Alamagan, despite the island having diverse topography and potential for naming.

"In 2020, we have asked ourselves for the first time what to do with these maps without names, because that's something special worldwide. And in 2021 we made some proposals as to remapping the island of Agrigan, for instance. So, we frankly admit to being ignorant about too many things in connection with the Marianas that people in the history."

Historical demographic statistics show continuous settlement on the island, yet no place names for geo objects are present.

A 1971 publication lists only the island's name, with no additional place names for geo objects.

"It's just an inventory of all the place names he found in the then U.S. mandate territory of Micronesia. So, it's all Micronesia. It's just a list."

Stolz added that the map features a small circle indicating a village, but its name is unclear.

Moreover, he compared the map of Alamagan with that of Pagan, which has many place names for geo objects which made the absence of place names in Alamagan's map puzzling, especially since Pagan has many named geo objects.

A slide show was then presented to compare the largely empty maps of other Gani Islands like Alamagan.

The recurrent theme, according to Stolz, is the general lack of place names on the maps, with the exception of villages.

The professor also discussed the importance of place names for cultural heritage and the challenges of reconstructing lost names.

The absence of place names on official maps raised questions from the audience about the reason behind this omission.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

COR

From page 1

Resort held a lease signing ceremony at the Resort and invited dignitaries to partake in the momentous occasion.

However, a few minutes in, it was learned that the signing hit a snag, and the ceremony was cancelled to give the appropriate parties to iron out the issues.

In a statement from Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, he shared that he too was only made aware that the lease signing ceremony would not push through on his way to COR.

"I had just come back from Guam, and I was notified prior to going to COR that the final lease agreement was not going to be signed as they needed to get together again for more discussion. Now, we need to come back again to see if there's a possibility to solve the issues [raised] without have to go back to a joint session," he said.

Saipan Tribune tried to reach out to the Department of Public Lands for an update on the lease issues but has yet to receive a response.

Meanwhile, according to E-Land's director for Hotel Development Yunkyu Ted Jung, as of press time COR has no updates on the lease agreement.

Palacios explains that Suwaso had raised a few issues regarding some of the provisions of the joint resolution [approved] by the Legislature weeks ago.

Now, Palacios has intervened in hopes of facilitating a productive conversation between all parties involved.

"I was briefed on it, but I'm going to bring DPL to sit with the OAG to see what needs to be done or if there's anything we can do about it and try to resolve it. I haven't really talked to COR. We'll attempt to have a formal discussion with them to figure out where this is going to go. That's the status," he said.

Palacios adds that he will soon have a conversation with the Legislature as the concerns raised were regarding provisions of the joint resolution,

"I know that it's a bit complicated. I'm not sure what needs to get done so I'll probably have to talk with the Legislature leadership and figure this out with them as the provision was in the join resolution that they passed. So, the Legislature needs to be part of this conversation. I'm to try my best to see what I can do to facilitate a discussion and see whether we can resolve this issue with the legislature and the COR," he said.

Saipan Tribune also reached out to Senate President Edith Deleon Guerrero (D-Saipan) and House Speaker Edmund Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) for a statement regarding the COR lease issue, but both stated they have yet to be made aware of the issues.

Last month, 19 members of the House of Representatives and all nine members of the Senate voted in favor of passing Joint Session Resolution 23-2, a joint session resolution granting approval of the final draft lease agreement entered into between the Department of Public Lands and Suwaso Corp. dba Coral Ocean Resort.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

$10K

From page 1

currently facing charges of robbery, disturbing the peace, and assault and battery.

Tenorio was remanded back to the Department of Corrections, until Dec.18 where she is to appear before court for her 10am preliminary hearing. Her arraignment is also set for Dec 23 at 9am. She will be represented by court appointed defense attorney Molly Dennert. Assistant attorney general Heather Barcinas will represent the government.

Court documents say that on Tuesday, Dec 10, at around 3:46pm, the Department of Public Safety dispatched officers to a reported disturbance at Club 88 Poker in Garapan. Upon arriving at Club 88 and they confirmed a robbery incident.

Staff at the establishment helped officers identify Tenorio, who reportedly kept shouting and could not calm down. Officers also identified and met with the victim and asked her what happened. The shopkeeper stated that Tenorio stole her purse and bit her hands, and officers confirmed seeing two tooth marks on the left and right hand along with bruising. The report states that officers tried to speak with Tenorio, but she was shouting and walked away and telling him not to touch her. When advising Tenorio she was not free to leave, she ignored him and walked away. The responding officer then held Tenorio's left arm but she kept pulling her arm away. He then struggled with her and they both struggled on the ground, the police officer then instructed Tenorio to stop resisting but she kept tucking her arms in toward her body. Shortly after the police officer was able to secure Tenorio in hand cuffs.

Tenorio was arrested for robbery and later brought to the Department of Corrections for booking and detention.

In the victim's statement she was at her business place, Full House Gift Shop, in Garapan when a female, later identified as Tenorio asked to borrow her cell phone. After a few minutes later, the victim asked for her cell phone back, but Tenorio refused with a "'no." The victim reached over to which Tenorio pulled the cell phone back and started to bend it. The victim said she reached over again and a struggle began with the two. Tenorio let go off the cell phone and pushed the victim causing her to fall. As she fell backwards, Tenorio grabbed at the victim's fanny pack across her chest, breaking the two end strap connectors, ran with it west towards Club 88. The victim said she chased after Tenorio and followed her inside Club 88, where she struggled to get her bag back from Tenorio. As the victim tried to reach for the bag, Tenorio began biting her hands but she managed to take her bag back.

The report states that Club 88 staff were trying to calm them down and called for police. Police spoke with witnesses and looked over surveillance footage which aligned with the victim's story.

The victim was able to recover her black-colored purse which contained a paper copy of her driver's license identification card, a paper copy of her Social Security card, a Bank of Hawaii receipt with her name on it, a receipt book with her store name on it, her Toyota Venza car key, a bundle of keys, and $528.57 in cash.

CPA

From page 1

Last week, CPA acting executive director Frederick Pangelinan issued Star Marianas a letter in response to the airline's request for an extension of its commercial use permit for its Tinian hangar.

Tinian being Star Marianas' home base, the hangar houses most of the airline's planes and equipment. Essentially evicting them from the premises would cripple Star Marianas' operations.

In his letter, Pangelinan said permittees seeking renewal must satisfy all outstanding balances.

CPA has been demanding Star Marianas pay over $1.3 million in landing and airport fees which Star Marianas contests as there is pending litigation with the local court on the matter.

"CPA is in receipt of your email regarding your request to extend the Commercial Use Permit for the Tinian Hangar. Pursuant to CPA's Land Management Rules and Regulations, NMIAC § 40-60-213 — Renewal… permittees seeking renewal must satisfy any and all outstanding payments and obligations due to the authority before the renewal application is approved. CPA has sent three letters of demand dating July 11, 2024, Aug. 13, 2024, and Oct. 3, 2024 requesting for payment on SMA's outstanding balance of $1,398,522.81(as of 10/3/24 Final Notice). Although, CPA received a response, SMA has not remitted any payments on the outstanding balances. As a result, CPA cannot approve SMA's renewal application/request," said Pangelinan.

Due to nonpayment, CPA said the request is denied and Star Marianas has 30 days to vacate the hangar.

"Thus, CPA informs SMA that you have thirty (30) days to vacate the Tinian Hangar, subject to appeal or extension. Thereafter, further unpermitted use of the Tinian hangar may be considered a trespass, pursuant to NMIAC § 40-60-007," said the letter.

CPA informed Star Marianas that it has 10 days to appeal the decision.

"Please note, pursuant to NMIAC § 40-60-214 applicants have the right to appeal the denial of any permit application or may raise any other grievance within ten days after he knows or should have known the facts giving rise to such grievance. Permittees may request an extension of time to vacate CPA lands upon the termination of any permit. All appeals and request for extension of time shall be filed in writing specifying the grounds therefore and addressed to the executive director. A CPA Appeals Committee consisting of three CPA board members appointed by the chairman shall consider and hear any appeal taken. The committee's decision shall be final and unreviewable," said Pangelinan.

Star Marianas has since appealed the decision and has appealed to CNMI leaders for their help in this critical matter.

BEAUTIFUL DESTINATIONS:

Saipan among favorite destinations

Beautiful Destinations—a creative agency with one of the largest online travel communities—has included Saipan, The Marianas as Top 10 in its "Your Favorites Destinations of 2024" on Instagram.

The list cites "hidden beaches and sunsets straight out of a dream" from the account of @ayaka_maru.saipan. Saipan is listed alongside Madeira, Portugal; Foroglio, Switzerland; the prefectures of Japan; and other worldwide destinations.

"We're pleased to see the name of The Marianas continuing to gain international recognition through our outreach efforts, and social media is one of the best ways our residents can partner with the MVA in promoting The Marianas," said Marianas Visitors Authority acting managing director Martin Duenas. "A quick #TheMarianas, #VisitTheMarianas or #Saipan #Tinian #Rota can go a long way in sharing the beauty and charm of our islands with the world."

Beautiful Destination is an international multi-award-winning strategic, creative and content agency. According to their website, over 50 million people follow their social channels "to be inspired about where to travel." ***(PR)***

IG@_MASTER_CHOI_

Saipan, The Marianas, is named on Instagram as Top 10 in the "Your Favorite Destinations of 2024" by Best Destinations, a creative agency with 50 million followers across its social media channels. The nod noted the destination's sunsets and beaches.

Sling Stone enhances warfighter capabilities, defense of Guam

ASAN, Guam—U.S. Indo-Pacific Command conducted a capabilities exercise named Sling Stone Dec. 4 to 10 to enhance warfighter capabilities and rehearse defense of the homeland operations parallel to the Missile Defense Agency's Flight Experiment Mission-02 in Guam.

The goal of the exercise was to use FEM-02, an Aegis Guam System missile intercept test held Dec. 10, as a tactical training event to hone skills, increase interoperability, and improve communication and understanding between forces while also coordinating with civil authorities to train for a whole-of-government approach to crisis response.

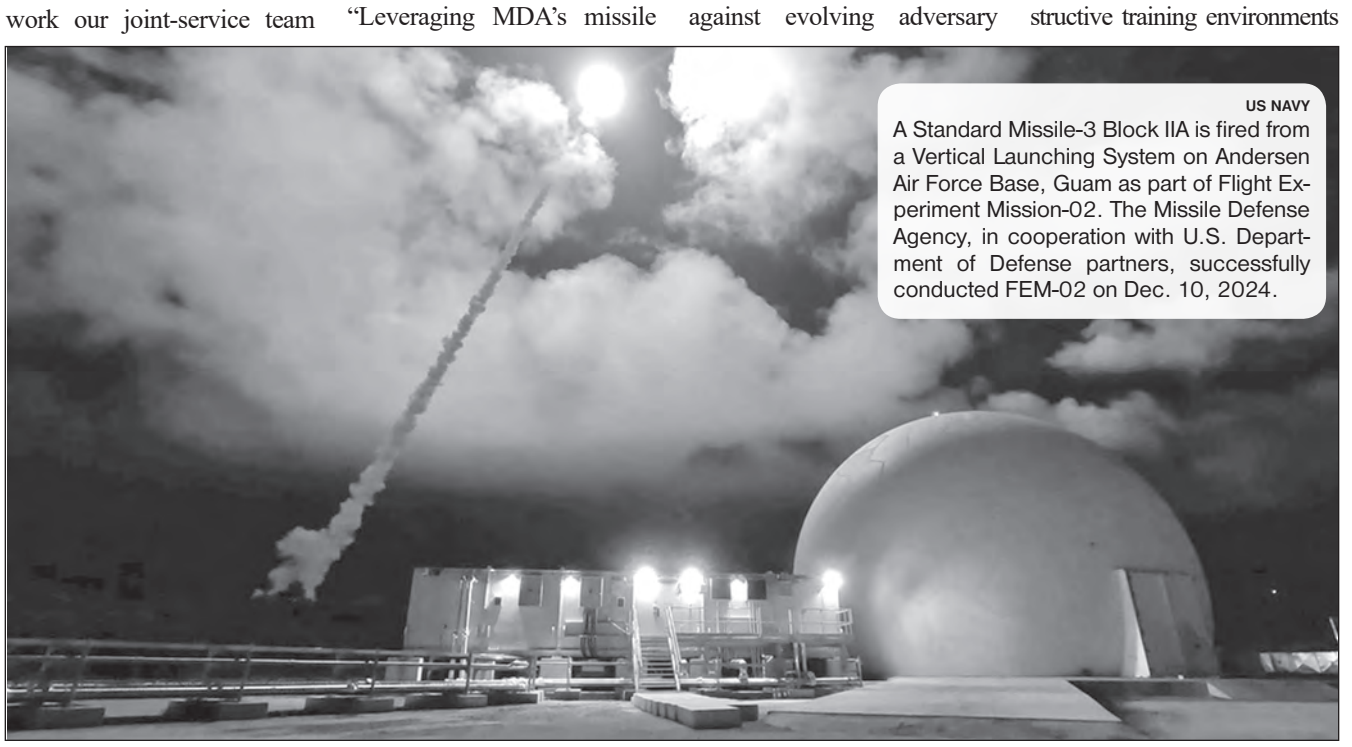
Sling Stone, held in conjunction with Joint Task Force-Micronesia, validated the Guam Defense System concept of operations. It brought together assets and personnel from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and allied forces to use the missile intercept for multi-domain training.

"The success of Sling Stone is a testament to the incredible work our joint-service team does every day to maintain a strong defensive posture in the Indo-Pacific region," said Navy Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, commander, JTF-M. "Leveraging MDA's missile intercept test to train how we fight just made sense. We will take lessons learned and continue to strengthen the architecture of Guam's defense against evolving adversary missile threats."

The CAPEX was conducted in two main phases. Phase one began ahead of FEM-02 and included live, virtual, and constructive training environments simulating real-world multi-domain operations on land, in the air, and at/from the sea.

US NAVY

Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero and senior military leaders on Guam track a Standard Missile-3 Block IIA as it intercepts a surrogate Medium Range Ballistic Missile target off the coast of Guam during the Missile Defense Agency's Flight Experiment Mission-02 (FEM-02), from the Joint Region Marianas Regional Operations Center, Dec. 10. Held concurrently, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's capabilities exercise Sling Stone leveraged FEM-02 to validate the Guam Defense System concept of operations. Sling Stone brought together assets and personnel from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and allied forces to use FEM-02 for multi-domain operations training.



US NAVY

A Standard Missile-3 Block IIA is fired from a Vertical Launching System on Andersen Air Force Base, Guam as part of Flight Experiment Mission-02. The Missile Defense Agency, in cooperation with U.S. Department of Defense partners, successfully conducted FEM-02 on Dec. 10, 2024.

US NAVY

A Standard Missile-3 Block IIA is fired from a Vertical Launching System on Andersen Air Force Base, Guam as part of Flight Experiment Mission-02. The Missile Defense Agency, in cooperation with U.S. Department of Defense partners, successfully conducted FEM-02 on Dec. 10, 2024.

Phase 2 of Sling Stone used MDA's missile intercept to allow the joint force to detect, track, and simulate engagement of the threat. During the event, a Standard Missile-3 Blk IIA, fired from a vertical launch system at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, intercepted a surrogate Medium Range Ballistic Missile target more than 200 nautical miles off the coast of northeast Guam, which was air-launched from an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III.

Simultaneously, the Navy's Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS *Milius* (DDG 69), operating off the coast of Guam, detected, tracked, and simulated engagement of the missile, providing air defense coverage from the sea.

Task Force Talon, the Army's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense unit located on Guam, also received missile tracking information. The THAAD battery provides ballistic missile defense coverage for the entire island of Guam.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Maya-class guided-missile destroyer JS *Haguro* (DDG 180) exercised its air defense support, increasing interoperability between international forces and fostering a broader-spectrum, shared information environment.

JTF-M and Joint Region Marianas continue to work closely with the Government of Guam to ensure military operations and exercises are fully coordinated. Sling Stone provided an opportunity for the military and Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense to rehearse the notification process and increase crisis-response readiness to better serve the community.

FEM-02 is part of the long-term initiative for the defense of Guam and will inform the larger effort to develop, install and operate Guam Defense System, which is comprised of a combination of Army, Navy, Air Force and MDA components that work together to provide Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense. These defense entities will develop and deploy a persistent layered missile defense system for Guam.

JTF-M's mission is to perform Homeland Defense, Defense Support to Civil Authorities, and Foreign Humanitarian Assistance through a whole of government approach within its assigned joint operations area.

For more information about JTF-M, visit https://www.pacom.mil/JTF-Micronesia/

For more information on MDA's role in the Defense of Guam, visit https://www.mda.mil/system/guamft/. ***(PR)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950
Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
MEMBER
The Associated Press
Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

TikTok ban won't solve the problem: Social media needs regulation, not one company ban

A federal appeals court Friday upheld a controversial law banning the U.S. operations of TikTok—the massively popular video-based social networking app owned by Chinese company ByteDance—unless it finds a U.S. buyer. That gives the company just six weeks to keep fighting before the ax falls. We have our issues with TikTok, but we won't be cheering that outcome.

This impacts a lot of Americans, as there are 170 million U.S. users, about half the total population of the country and more than the combined numbers who voted for Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.

The most dangerous aspect of TikTok, a potential Chinese state weaponization, is speculative. Lawmakers and the Department of Justice are arguing that the platform could be compelled to share data on users with authorities in Beijing, or used to gather information on potential spies or any number of other schemes running the gamut from plausible to Tom Clancy novel.

Yet there's no public hard evidence that any of this has actually happened or even been attempted; we specific "public" because these officials have insisted that there is secret evidence to suggest that these are real and present threats, and are acting on that secret evidence.

We understand that there are sensitive techniques and information that must be classified for reasons of national security and safety—a principle, by the way, that the incoming president does not himself seem to grasp, and is skirting consequences for violating—but this isn't how we should be doing things in this country. Effectively banning the operation of an entire company based on secret evidence that our political leaders simply assure us exists is not really in keeping with our principles of due process and transparency.

We present no defense of TikTok, which previously has been caught censoring views that Beijing doesn't like, and it is undoubtedly designed to be addictive and appeal in particular to kids and teens, who can get sucked into the endless scroll. It has been used to push harmful content and misinformation around things like eating disorders and vaccines, and its sheer breadth and reach make this information often spread before it can be moderated.

If you're thinking that could just as well be true of Meta and its Facebook and Instagram platforms, or Alphabet with YouTube, then you can see what we're driving at. But what makes TikTok different is that those parents aren't foreign owned, and owned by an unfriendly country.

There are plenty of things to be concerned about with TikTok, just as there are plenty of things to regulate around all of these social media companies. At least these are at least attempting some kind of even-handed moderation, unlike the platform formerly known as Twitter, which has become the cesspool of X under Elon Musk's ownership.

Moving to completely ban TikTok on what seem like thin and largely speculative national security grounds is a red herring drawing attention away from the fact that all these social media platforms have been allowed to run roughshod over our social and political fabric with a very light touch from regulators. We'd all be better served dropping this effort and taking aim at the broader system.

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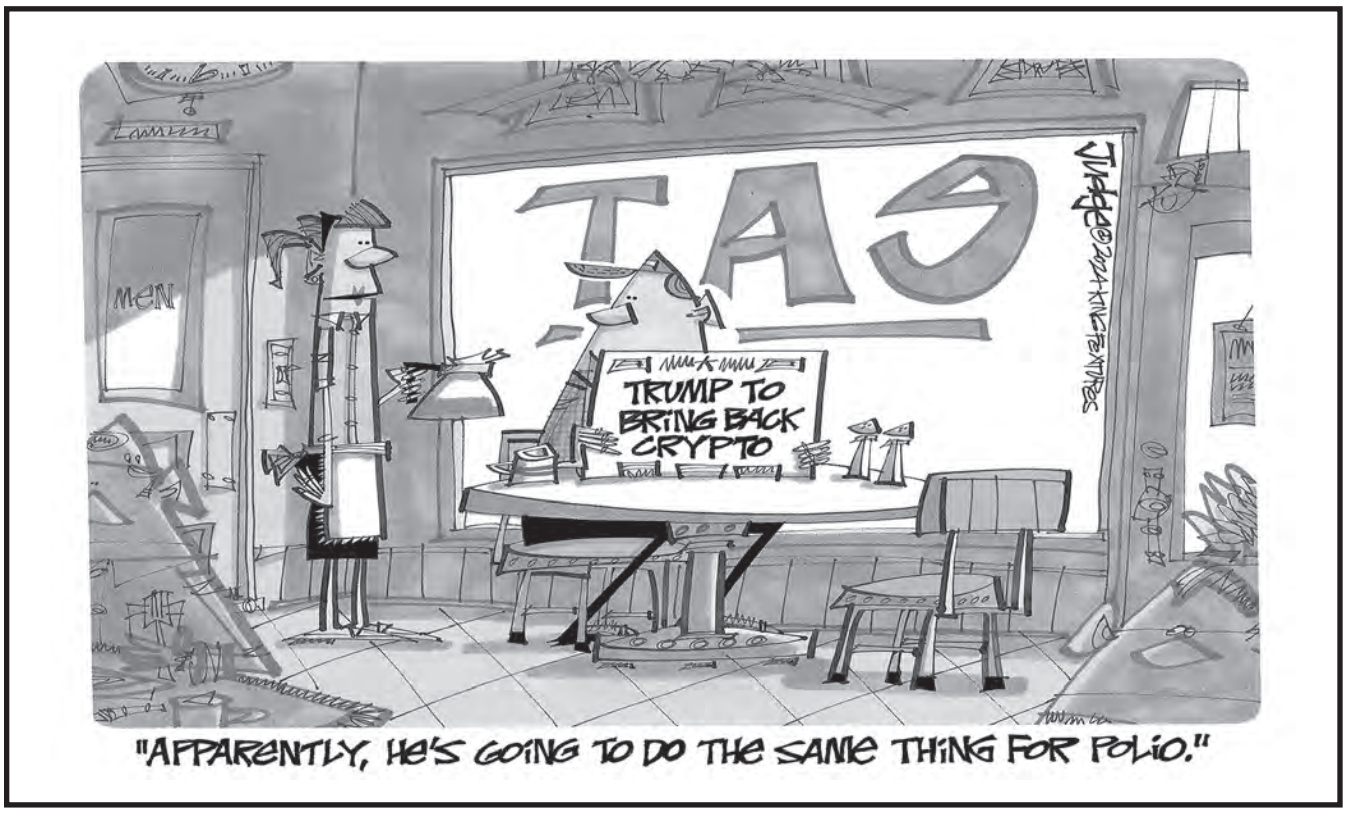


Assad's fall deals a blow to Russia and Iran, but leaves Syria's future uncertain

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Syrians are dancing in the streets of Damascus and other cities, to celebrate the collapse of the hideous regime of Bashar al-Assad, the man responsible for an estimated 600,000 dead in a 13-year-long civil war—including tens of thousands viciously tortured to death in his dungeons.

Those still alive have been staggering out of liberated prisons, limping and running toward family and freedom.

"This is the moment of celebration," I was told by the University of Oklahoma's Joshua Landis, a Syria specialist with family in the country. He told me the dispirited Syrian army had faded away and let rebels win because they had been receiving little or no pay and no further support from their Russian and Iranian backers.

That's the good news.

The not so good news: No one is certain what kind of government will follow Assad in the weeks to come—whether it will help stabilize the region, including Lebanon and possibly Gaza, or further tear it apart.

The critical news, which may save Syria from a relapse into violence: Assad's flight to exile in Moscow is a body blow to Iran's ayatollahs and Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, for whom Syria had critical importance. It displays their increasing weakness and paints them as losers. It makes them more vulnerable to anyone who seeks negotiations with either.

President-elect Trump, take note.

The immediate post-Assad threat is that Syria might collapse into separate militia fiefs or into another civil war. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (known as HTS)— the main rebel group that toppled the government in a lightning advance from the north—was once the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda. Its leader, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, broke with the terrorist group several years ago and is trying to soften his image. But Syria's many minorities will have doubts.

"Jolani's going to have to reach out to all these different Syrian communities," said Landis, hopefully.

I still recall my last visit inside Syria in 2012, during the Arab Spring just before the heightened civil war and Islamist kidnappings made journalistic access almost impossible.

With a Syrian translator, I visited a headquarters of a group called Ahrar al-Sham, inside an abandoned school, and the aggressive hostility of the fighters was only contained when a Belgian volunteer intervened. I soon left. I also interviewed moderate, unbearded civilian fighters who had set up militias because they wanted a democracy to replace Assad's vicious rule.

How to coalesce secular Syrians, moderate Muslims, Kurds, and Christians into a government with Islamists, and whether free elections will be possible is the huge challenge Syria will face.

Yet, what gives me hope is that the Iranians and Russians will no longer be able to bend Syria to their will.

After a popular uprising in 2011, Assad was only able to retain power because of intervention by Tehran, and later by Moscow. Although Syria has a religiously and ethnically mixed population, including a plurality of Sunni Muslims along with Kurds, Christians and other minorities, Assad belongs to a minority Shiite sect, known as Alawites, who have controlled the country for decades. Thus he was close to the Shiite regime in Tehran.

The Iranians sent thousands of fighters to Syria, comprised of their own forces along with Iraqi Shiite militias and even Afghan refugees living in Iran. Led by Iranian Revolutionary Guards officers, they were much more effective combatants than the underpaid and corrupt Syrian army.

Iran's quid pro quo was Assad's permission to allow Iranian weapons and missiles to be trucked and flown from Tehran via Damascus to Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon to use against Israel.

Syria thus became a critical element of Tehran's effort to encircle Israel with a "ring of fire" that included Lebanon's Hezbollah militiamen (along with Hamas in Gaza and Houthis in Yemen).

With Assad gone and Sunni Syrian rebel groups in charge, Iranians are fleeing the country. No more will they be able to transport weapons to Lebanon to be used against Israel. Nor will they be able to help the Alawite minority dominate the country.

Russia, for its part, sent planes in 2015 to bomb Syrian civilians and cities into rubble, just as they have done to Ukraine. Moscow was rewarded with a critical Mediterranean port in Tartus and a major airfield which helped support Putin's expansionist ambitions.

Russia will most likely lose those bases, which gave them their only access to the Mediterranean and gave Putin an important Mideast role. His global access is thus shrinking. And Syria, hopefully, will be freed from his colonial games.

This means that the Islamists, and Jolani, will have to look to the moderate Sunni Arab world and to the West to help rebuild their country and resettle Syrian refugees who return. Which in turn gives those Arabs and Western leaders leverage to prevent any attempt to impose an ultraconservative religious state.

If this leverage is not used wisely, Jolani could become a threat, in a country where ISIS still has cells that are in touch with their counterparts in Iraq. If used wisely, Syria could revive and rebuild its shattered society.

Nothing less is owed to the thousands who died under torture during Assad's rule.

Trump hoped his Cabinet picks could escape serious vetting. He was so wrong

By DOYLE MCMANUS
Los Angeles Times

Doyle McManus is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

WASHINGTON—In a normal presidential transition, the president-elect spends weeks carefully considering candidates for the most important jobs in his Cabinet. Potential nominees undergo rigorous private vetting by trusted aides and lawyers, then by the FBI. It's a painstaking process that often consumes the entire three months between the election and the inauguration.

But when has Donald Trump ever recognized any value in traditional norms?

He refused to authorize the FBI to begin its customary background checks, because he hoped to do without them or because he didn't trust the G-men, or both.

Instead of waiting for investigations, he announced most of his nominees in three weeks—apparently imagining that the tsunami would force the Senate to confirm them quickly.

He even proposed skipping the constitutionally required step of Senate confirmation entirely, pushing to fill his Cabinet through the back door of "recess appointments." He was apparently surprised when otherwise loyal GOP senators quietly refused to roll over for that audacious power grab.

His nominations set a new record for speed, if not for quality.

The outcome was predictable. His most controversial nominees—picked apparently with little or no private vetting—were followed by a parade of skeletons streaming out of closets. (Some of the skeletons had been strutting in public for years.)

The ensuing media leaks were embarrassing. They made the second Trump administration look just as chaotic as the first. But there were substantive political effects as well.

Most presidents use their transition, and the honeymoon period that normally follows, to build public support for their policies and programs. But Trump must now spend most of his time jawboning GOP senators to back his nominees.

Opinion polls show that his support in the public hasn't grown since election day; he's still stuck at the 50-50 mark in favorability.

And it was all avoidable.

"When the Senate confirmation process works properly, it's in the best interest of the president—even though presidents are usually annoyed by it," said Gregg Nunziata, a former Senate Republican aide who handled dozens of nominations. "There's an existing protocol to handle allegations confidently and discreetly. If that protocol isn't followed, the interest [in a nominee's background] is going to spill out into other channels"—mainly the news media.

That's what's happening now. The vetting of Trump's Cabinet is being done after the fact, mostly by the news media. The results have not been pretty.

Matt Gaetz, the former Florida congressman Trump proposed for attorney general, somehow thought he could skate past the House Ethics Committee's evidence that he had paid a 17-year-old for sex. (The New York Times reported that Trump chose Gaetz impulsively after a meeting with Gaetz and Tesla founder Elon Musk aboard the president-elect's private jet.)

Eight days after the nomination was announced, CNN reported that Gaetz had a second illicit encounter with the girl. His nomination was finished by nightfall.

Next up was Pete Hegseth, the Fox News host known for his opposition to women in combat roles and his war on "woke" generals. Trump proposed Hegseth for secretary of Defense, a job that entails managing almost 3 million people and an $849-billion budget, even though he had never run anything remotely comparable.

At first, the National Guard veteran looked headed for confirmation, as GOP senators fell into line. Then a whistleblower told Trump aides that a woman had accused Hegseth of raping her in a Monterey hotel in 2017, and the story promptly leaked. (Hegseth said the encounter was consensual.) Two days later, it emerged that Hegseth had paid the accuser in exchange for a nondisclosure agreement.

Skeletons continued their march. The New York Times reported that Hegseth's mother had sent him an email scolding him for abusing women. (She disavowed the message and denounced the newspaper for revealing it.) The New Yorker reported that Hegseth's former employees at a veterans' organization said he had been intoxicated and disorderly at company events. NBC quoted his former Fox News colleagues saying he drank there, too. ("I never had a drinking problem," said Hegseth, who promised to stop drinking.)

Hegseth's support among Republican senators began to erode, with many saying he needed to undergo a full FBI investigation.

Last week, Trump mused to aides that he might replace Hegseth with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. But by Friday, the president-elect turned defiant on social media: "Pete is a WINNER, and there is nothing that can be done to change that!"

So the Hegseth battle will continue—at a potential further political cost.

"His confirmation hearings are going to be completely brutal," a Republican strategist warned. "There will be weeks of coverage on cable TV, which is a medium Trump cares about. How much stomach does he have for that when he's about to take office?"

Hegseth isn't the only nominee who faces a struggle. Some GOP senators have expressed concern about Tulsi Gabbard, the former Democrat designated for director of national intelligence. Kash Patel, his nominee for FBI director, will have to defend his goal of using the law enforcement agency as a weapon of retribution against political opponents. And Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will need to explain his long-proclaimed belief that no vaccine is safe.

The scrutiny of those nominees has barely begun.

Now Trump faces an unpalatable choice: long, bruising and public fights to put controversial nominees into office, or quick decisions to cut failing candidates loose as he did with Gaetz.

It isn't unusual for incoming presidents to lose a Cabinet nominee or two.

If they fail quickly, the damage is rarely great. Who remembers that President Biden couldn't win confirmation for his first nominee as budget director, Neera Tanden, or that Trump couldn't get his first-term nominee as Labor secretary, Andrew Puzder, confirmed?

But Trump has made a potentially irreparable mistake.

By proposing so many nominees with flagrantly weak qualifications beyond political loyalty, he has turned their confirmations into zero-sum tests of his ability to compel obedience from prideful senators. With only a 53-47 majority in the chamber, the loss of any four could mean defeat.

Even before his inauguration, the president-elect has already failed in two respects. His abortive proposal to finagle nominees into office without Senate confirmation alienated legislators whose help he will need over the next four years.

And he may have thought he could get the jump on his opponents by announcing his nominees early — yet another miscalculation. He merely gave the news media enough time to subject them to the scrutiny they deserved from the beginning.

Don't let RFK Jr. distract from the big health threat—Sugar

By F.D. FLAM
Bloomberg Opinion

F.D. Flam is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering science. She is host of the "Follow the Science" podcast.

Are there "toxic chemicals" in food killing Americans? That fear is getting lots of attention thanks to Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President-elect Donald Trump's pick to head the Department of Health and Human Services. Kennedy contends that substances banned in Europe are tainting our cereals and other processed foods.

Kennedy has targeted Froot Loops as an example of the failings of the U.S. food regulation system. The U.S. version of the cereal, for example, gets its flavoring and vibrant colors from artificial food dyes. In contrast, the Canadian version's flavors and muted colors come from ingredients like the concentrated juices of watermelon, blueberries and carrots.

But that doesn't mean the dyes used in U.S. food are toxic or killing anyone. Other countries take a more cautious approach to food additives, sometimes banning them because they can't be proven safe beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The European Union recently banned titanium dioxide, a coloring agent, from food products, though it's considered safe in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and the U.S. A toxicologist who's done testing for the industry told me the chemical didn't cause cancer in rats fed massive amounts. Concerns surfaced after a 1986 study in which the animals were made to inhale the additive at a concentration of 250 milligrams per cubic meter.

To put that in perspective, that amount is 50 times as dense as the dust in a typical dust storm, he said. "For a rat to live a week in that is amazing, or even a day. … They lived two years," he said. But titanium dioxide was still banned because testing couldn't rule out that it might damage DNA and cause cancer.

There also are some food dyes that aren't banned but that the EU requires to have warning labels, which discourages the industry from using them.

In the U.S., the FDA sometimes requires the industry to show data from animal testing before authorizing a new additive. But feeding even large quantities of an additive to rats and mice over weeks or months can't perfectly predict its effects on humans over the years, said Michael Jacobson, a biochemist and founder of the consumer advocacy group Center for Science in the Public Interest. Jacobson said while researchers might be able to check for things like organ damage and cancer, these studies wouldn't be able to flag a chemical that caused ADHD or lowered IQ.

The FDA also allows some ingredients into our food without animal testing under a category known as GRAS, for Generally Recognized as Safe. The category includes some well-known ingredients such as vinegar, yeast and caffeine. But there are loopholes and errors. Jacobson said his group spent years fighting trans fats, once considered healthier than animal fats. Trans fats were finally banned in 2018 after evidence piled up that they increased the risk of dementia and heart attacks.

Despite the varying approaches to testing and deciding which additives to ban, there is one ingredient that nearly all experts agree is harmful to our health: sugar.

Obviously, sugar won't kill you in small quantities, but as Swiss physician and chemist Paracelsus recognized 500 years ago, the dose makes the poison. Sugar is listed as the second ingredient in Froot Loops. The average American consumes more than 66 pounds of sugar a year.

That's too much, contends Robert Lustig, a pediatrician specializing in hormonal disorders and obesity at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine. "While all of these other things that are in processed food are bad, none of them holds a candle to the sugar," he said.

He's concerned with fructose, a component of sugar and other sweeteners, including high fructose corn syrup, maple syrup, honey and agave. It acts very differently in our cells from glucose, the building block of starches.

He described how fructose triggers the production of fat in the liver, leading to what he calls metabolic derangement and, eventually, Type 2 diabetes. The toxic effect was demonstrated not just in animals but in people. In one study, he and colleagues monitored children on their typical home diets, then again after replacing some of the sugar in their diets with starch. They kept the calories the same. After just a few days, the children had less fat in their livers, lower blood pressure, lower serum triglycerides, and their insulin production normalized.

Fruit contains fructose, but an apple has five grams compared to 10 grams in an 8-oz Coke. The fiber in most fruit protects the liver from the incoming assault — which is why juice can raise the risk of diabetes while fruit does not. Lustig doesn't dismiss the harm caused by other additives, BPA, or other chemicals that sneak in from packaging — but he estimates that sugar is causing 80% of our food-related health troubles.

We can't ban sugar, but Jacobson of the Center for Science in the Public Interest said other countries have successfully reduced sugar consumption by taxing sugary drinks. In Chile, foods high in sugar and other ingredients deemed harmful must carry a warning label—shaped like a stop sign—and can't be marketed to children or sold in schools. Several other countries, including Israel and Mexico, have tried similar warning systems.

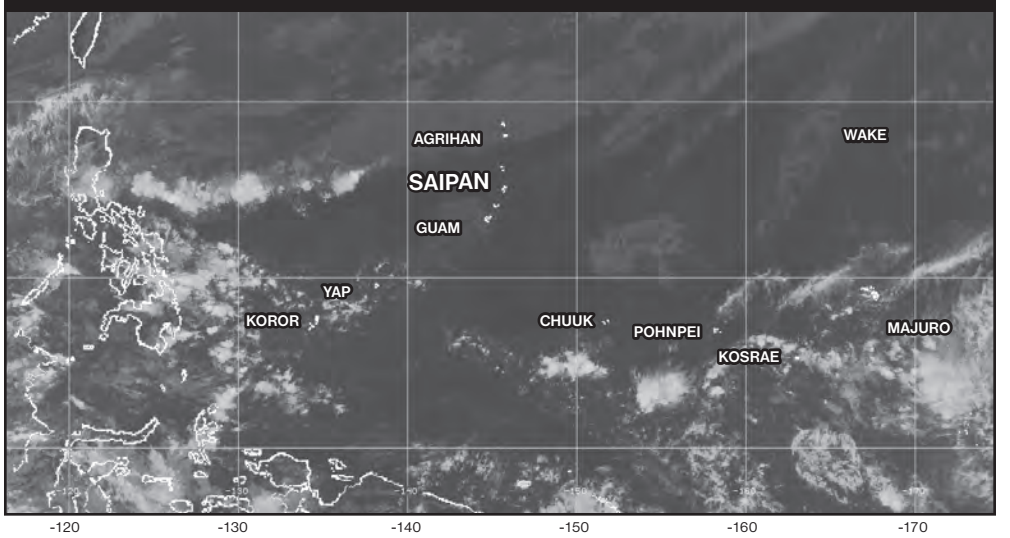
Taking the artificial dyes out of Froot Loops can't hurt, but it probably won't help much. Taking away the friendly Toucan and slapping on a stop sign—that might be a start toward making America healthier.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy. Isolated showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Mostly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Partly sunny with a 30 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
87° 78°	87° 78°	87° 78°	87° 78°	87° 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 11:33 AM WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Updated the forecast for Palau for today and tonight to reflect a short-term drying trend, or at least a general reduction in showers. Did not touch the inherited QPF grids that indicate around a half inch of rainfall for the 12-hr daytime period today, but did remove the locally heavy wording for showers as convection is not expected to be significant enough to result in potential flooding impacts today or tonight. Recent CIMSS MIMIC TPW still shows ample moisture in the region, but the weak convergence boundary that has provided the forcing for showers has shifted north of Palau`s waters. Additionally, have reduced the potential of thunderstorms to merely a slight chance as early morning gridded NUCAPS data shows minimally-supportive conditions for short-lived thunderstorms with mid-level RH around 60-70 percent decreasing with height to 300mb. The dry mid and upper-level conditions enveloping the showers across Palau and Yap are also noted in the Himawari-9 water vapor bands.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	87° / 79°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	87° / 80°
Chuuk	Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	87° / 78°
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 78°
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:33 AM	5:47 PM
Friday	6:33 AM	5:48 PM
Saturday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Sunday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM
Monday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	4:00 AM	3:40 PM
Friday	-	5:04 AM	4:35 PM
Saturday	-	6:10 AM	5:34 PM
Sunday	-	6:10 AM	5:34 PM
Monday	-	7:15 AM	6:37 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Showers	72° / 59°
Beijing	Sunny	36° / 16°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	64° / 57°
Honolulu	Windy	80° / 71°
London	Cloudy	46° / 43°
Los Angeles	Sunny	67° / 49°
Manila	Mostly Sunny	90° / 79°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	90° / 68°
Miami	Sunny	66° / 54°
New York	Sunny	39° / 31°
Osaka	Showers	57° / 43°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	46° / 34°
Busan	Sunny	43° / 30°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 34°
Salem	Sunny	56° / 29°
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 50°
Seoul	Sunny	36° / 19°
Tokyo	Rain	52° / 43°
Washington, DC	Sunny	44° / 30°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:35 AM	High Tide	1.46
10:37 AM	Low Tide	0.82
4:23 PM	High Tide	1.89
11:47 PM	Low Tide	-0.40

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	1:20PM	4:00PM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3218/2305	2:45AM	10:20PM	Daily via Incheon
UA076/183 Guam	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:30AM	6:25AM	Daily
7C3218	2:45AM	6:45AM	Daily from Dec 8
7C3212	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3552	3:55AM	7:20AM	3, 6 from Dec 25

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX77	3:05AM	5:55AM	1, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	5:30PM	10:05PM	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA156	00:40AM	6:25AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:40AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA156	00:40AM	8:45AM	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM +1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3407	11:20PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3211	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:00PM	1:30AM+1	Daily
7C3217	8:10PM	1:40AM+1	Daily from Dec 8

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3551	9:25PM	2:50AM+1	2, 5 from Dec 25

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

HX76	6:25PM	1:35AM+1	4, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Making $1B investment in US? Trump pledges expedited permits — but there are hurdles

WASHINGTON (AP)— President-elect Donald Trump is promising expedited federal permits for energy projects and other construction worth more than $1 billion. But like other Trump plans, the idea is likely to run into regulatory and legislative hurdles, including a landmark law that requires federal agencies to consider the environmental impact before deciding on major projects.

In a post on his Truth Social site Tuesday, Trump said anyone making a $1 billion investment in the United States "will receive fully expedited approvals and permits, including, but in no way limited to, all Environmental approvals."

"GET READY TO ROCK!!!" he added.

While Trump did not specify who would be eligible for accelerated approvals, dozens of energy projects proposed nationwide, from natural gas pipelines and export terminals to solar farms and offshore wind turbines, meet the billion-dollar criteria.

AP

A crew works on a gas drilling rig at a well site for shale based natural gas in Zelienople, Pa. June 25, 2012.

Environmental groups slammed the proposal, calling it illegal on its face and a clear violation of the National Environmental Policy Act, a 54-year-old law that requires federal agencies to study the potential environmental impact of proposed actions and consider alternatives.

"Trump is unabashedly and literally offering to sell out America to the highest corporate bidder," said Lena Moffitt, executive director of Evergreen Action, an environmental group. She said the plan was "obviously illegal" and another example of Trump "putting special interests and corporate polluters in the driver's seat, which would result in more pollution, higher costs and fewer energy choices for the American people."

Alexandra Adams, chief policy advocacy officer at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said Trump should be careful what he wishes for.

"What if someone wants to build a waste incinerator next to Mar-a-Lago or a coal mine next to Bedminster golf course?" she asked, referring to Trump's Florida home and New Jersey golf club, respectively.

"There's a reason Congress requires the government to take a hard look at community impacts to make sure we don't greenlight projects that do more harm than good. Cheerleading on social media doesn't change that reality," Adams said.

Energy analyst Kevin Book said Trump's post showed his usual flair for showmanship but said there was a real concern underlying it: a bipartisan push for permitting reform to speed up major environmental projects that now take years to win approval.

"The substance here is he is really serious about trying to get permitting reform done," said Book, managing partner at ClearView Energy Partners, a Washington research firm.

"Permitting delays are an impediment in many sectors — including energy — and there are multiple billion-dollar investments waiting for permitting reform," Book said.

A bipartisan plan championed by Senate Energy Committee Chairman Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the committee's top Republican, would speed up permitting for major energy and mineral projects, but its chances are uncertain in the final few weeks of the current Congress.

Their plan would boost energy projects of all types, bringing down prices, creating domestic jobs and allowing the U.S. to continue as a global energy leader, Barrasso and Manchin say.

Critics say the bill would open major expanses of public lands and waters for oil and gas drilling and gut executive and judicial review.

"Checking off wish lists for oil, gas and mining companies is not permitting reform," said Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee. He called the bill "a dirty deal" that would exempt some oil and gas drilling projects from federal review and "let mining companies dump even more toxic waste on our public lands."

Jason Miller, a senior adviser to Trump, said Trump's second term will be a "golden age of regulation-cutting," including a promise to "drill, baby, drill."

"If you want to bring in money, he's going to move heaven and earth to get that money in the door and get it invested in the United States," Miller said Tuesday at a conference organized by the Wall Street Journal.

The plan applies to both domestic and foreign investment, Miller said: "He wants to get the money and he wants to get the regulations cut and get the economy moving again."

Suspect in killing of UnitedHealthcare's CEO struggles, shouts while entering courthouse

ALTOONA, Pa. (AP)— The man accused of killing UnitedHealthcare's CEO struggled with deputies and shouted while being led into court Tuesday as new details emerged about his possible motivation behind the ambush.

In his first public words since a five-day search ended with his arrest at a McDonald's in Pennsylvania, Luigi Nicholas Mangione emerged from a patrol car shouting about an "insult to the intelligence of the American people" while deputies pushed him inside a courthouse.

The 26-year-old Ivy League graduate from a prominent Maryland real estate family is fighting attempts to extradite him to New York so that he can face a murder charge in the Manhattan killing of Brian Thompson, who led the United States' largest medical insurance company.

A law enforcement bulletin obtained by The Associated Press said that at the time of his arrest, Mangione was carrying a handwritten document expressing anger with what he called "parasitic" health insurance companies and a disdain for corporate greed and power.

He wrote that the U.S. has the most expensive health care system in the world and that profits of major corporations continue to rise while "our life expectancy" does not, according to the bulletin.

In social media posts, Mangione called "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski—who carried out a series of bombings while railing against modern society and technology—a "political revolutionary," according to the police bulletin.

Mangione remained jailed in Pennsylvania, where he was initially charged with possession of an unlicensed firearm, forgery and providing false identification to police.

Manhattan prosecutors were beginning to take steps to bring Mangione to New York, but at a brief hearing Tuesday, defense lawyer Thomas Dickey said his client will not waive extradition and instead wants a hearing on the issue. Mangione was denied bail after prosecutors said he was too dangerous to be released.

He mostly stared straight ahead at the hearing, occasionally looking at papers, rocking in his chair or looking back at the gallery. At one point, he began to speak to respond to the court discussion but was quieted by his lawyer.

"You can't rush to judgment in this case or any case," Dickey said afterward. "He's presumed innocent. Let's not forget that."

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Tuesday night on the social platform X that she will sign "a request for a governor's warrant to ensure the suspect in the murder of Brian Thompson is held accountable in New York."

Mangione was arrested in Altoona, Pennsylvania, about 230 miles (about 370 kilometers) west of New York City, after a McDonald's customer recognized him and notified an employee, authorities said.

Images of Mangione released Tuesday by Pennsylvania State Police showed him pulling down his mask in the corner of the McDonald's while holding what appeared to be hash browns and wearing a winter jacket and beanie. In another photo from a holding cell, he stood unsmiling with rumpled hair.

Biden says he was 'stupid' not to put his name on pandemic relief checks like Trump did

WASHINGTON (AP)— President Joe Biden said Tuesday he was "stupid" not to put his own name on pandemic relief checks in 2021, noting that Donald Trump had done so in 2020 and likely got credit for helping people out through this simple, effective act of branding.

Biden did the second-guessing as he delivered a speech at the Brookings Institution defending his economic record and challenging Trump to preserve Democratic policy ideas when he returns to the White House next month.

As Biden focused on his legacy with his term ending, he suggested Trump should keep the Democrats' momentum going and ignore the policies of his allies. The president laid out favorable recent economic data but acknowledgedhis rare public regret that he had not been more self-promotional in advertising the financial support provided by his administration as the country emerged from the pandemic.

"I signed the American Rescue Plan, the most significant economic recovery package in our history, and also learned something from Donald Trump," Biden said at the Washington-based think tank. "He signed checks for people for 7,400 bucks ... and I didn't. Stupid."

The decision by the former reality TV star and real estate developer to add his name to the checks sent by the U.S. Treasury to millions of Americans struggling during the coronavirus marked the first time a president's name appeared on any IRS payments.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, who replaced him as the Democratic nominee, largely failed to convince the American public of the strength of the economy. The addition of 16 million jobs, funding for infrastructure, new factories and investments in renewable energy were not enough to overcome public exhaustion over inflation, which spiked in 2022 and left many households coping with elevated grocery, gasoline and housing costs.

More than 6 in 10 voters in November's election described the economy as "poor" or "not so good," according to AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of the electorate. Trump won nearly 7 in 10 of the voters who felt the economy was in bad shape, paving the way for a second term as president after his 2020 loss to Biden.

Biden used his speech to argue that Trump was inheriting a strong economy that is the envy of the world. The inflation rate fell without a recession that many economists had viewed as inevitable, while the unemployment rate is a healthy 4.2% and applications to start new businesses are at record levels.

Biden called the numbers under his watch "a new set of benchmarks to measure against the next four years."

Nation

MORE BEANS AND LESS RED MEAT:

Nutrition experts weigh in on US dietary guidelines

AP

In this Nov. 2, 2013 file photo, various cuts of beef and pork are displayed for sale in the meat department at a discount market in Arlington, Va.

Americans should eat more beans, peas and lentils and cut back on red and processed meats and starchy vegetables, all while continuing to limit added sugars, sodium and saturated fat.

That's the advice released Tuesday by a panel of nutrition experts charged with counseling the U.S. government about the 2025 edition of the dietary guidelines that will form the cornerstone of federal food programs and policy.

But the 20-member panel didn't weigh in on the growing role of ultraprocessed foods that have been linked to health problems, saying there's not enough evidence to tell people to avoid them. And the group steered clear of updating controversial guidance on alcohol consumption, leaving that analysis to two outside reports expected to be released soon.

Overall, the recommendations for the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans sound familiar, said Marion Nestle, a food policy expert.

"This looks like every other set of dietary guidelines since 1980: eat your veggies and reduce consumption of foods high in salt, sugar and saturated fat," Nestle said in an email. "This particular statement says nothing about balancing calories, when overconsumption of calories, especially from ultra-processed foods, is the biggest challenge to the health of Americans."

What the scientific panel said about healthy diets

The nutrition panel concluded that a healthy diet for people aged 2 years and older is higher in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, whole grains, fish and and vegetable oils that are higher in unsaturated fat.

It is lower in red and processed meats, sugar-sweetened foods and beverages, refined grains and saturated fat. It may also include fat-free or low-fat dairy and foods lower in sodium and may include plant-based foods.

The panel, which met for nearly two years, was the first to focus on the dietary needs of Americans through what they called a "health equity lens," said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, a Massachusetts General Hospital obesity expert who was part of the group. That meant considering factors such as household income, race, ethnicity and culture when recommending healthy diets. It will help ensure that the guidance "reflects and includes various population groups," she said in an email.

The panel didn't come to conclusions on ultraprocessed foods or alcohol

Ultraprocessed foods include the snacks, sugary cereals and frozen meals that make up about 60% of the American diet.

The panel considered more than 40 studies, including several that showed links between ultraprocessed foods and becoming overweight or developing obesity. But the nutrition experts had concerns with the quality of the research, leaving them to conclude that the evidence was too limited to make recommendations.

That decision is likely to bump up against the views of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the nominee to lead the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, who has questioned potential conflicts of interest among members of the dietary guidelines panel and vowed to crack down on ultraprocessed foods that contribute to chronic disease.

The panel also didn't revise recommendations that suggest limiting alcohol intake to two drinks or less a day for men and one drink or less a day for women.

In 2020, the last time the guidance was updated, the government rejected the advice of scientific advisers to recommend less alcohol consumption.

Two groups—the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine and a committee of the government agency that oversees substance abuse—are expected to release reports in the coming months on the effects of moderate alcohol use to inform the guidelines.

Do Americans follow dietary guidelines?

The advisory panel acknowledged that the diets of most Americans don't meet the current guidelines. More than half of all U.S. adults have one or more diet-related chronic health conditions and 18 million U.S. households have insecure sources of food, according to the report.

"Nutrition-related chronic health conditions and their precursors continue to threaten health through the lifespan," the report concludes. "Which does not bode well for the future of health in the United States."

What happens next?

The scientific report informs the dietary guidelines, which are updated every five years. Tuesday's recommendations now go to HHS and the Agriculture Department, where officials will draft the final guidance set for release next year.

Starting Wednesday, the public will have 60 days to comment on the guidance. HHS and USDA officials will hold a public meeting Jan. 16 to discuss the recommendations.

World

POLAND'S LEADER TUSK SAYS

Talks over war in Ukraine could start 'in the winter'

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—Poland's prime minister said Tuesday that negotiations over Russia's war in neighboring Ukraine could start "in the winter," as his country prepares to take over the rotating presidency of the European Union on Jan. 1.

"Our presidency will have, among others, joint responsibility for the shape of the political landscape, for what the situation will look like probably during the negotiations that, perhaps—there are still question marks here—will begin in the winter of this year," Prime Minister Donald Tusk told his Cabinet.

He said he hoped that the "end effect" of Poland's and the EU's efforts will be peace in Ukraine.

He offered no details of the efforts or any time frame. He didn't say who might be involved in the negotiations or where or when they might take place.

Poland has been one of Ukraine's strongest backers against Russia's full-scale invasion, which began on Feb. 24, 2022. Poland will assume the EU presidency just weeks before President-elect Donald Trump takes office in the U.S.

Trump has been pushing for an end to the war in Ukraine and during his campaign said that he could settle the matter in a day if he were elected.

In a television interview that aired Sunday, Trump also said he would be open to reducing military aid to Ukraine and pulling the United States out of NATO. Those are two threats that have alarmed Ukraine, NATO allies and many in the U.S. national security community.

Tusk said that he would be holding numerous meetings with political leaders concerning the situation relating to the war in Ukraine.

Later Tuesday, he was meeting with Friedrich Merz, the head of Germany's CDU party, who was returning from talks in Kyiv with the Ukrainian government. Tusk will also speak with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

French President Emmanuel Macron is expected in Warsaw on Thursday, and Tusk said they will talk about meetings Macron recently held in Paris with Trump and Zelenskyy.

Tusk said that Poland was taking the six-month EU presidency during a "very dramatic" situation for the continent. Last week, he pointed to armed conflicts, also in Europe's vicinity, political crises some of Europe's biggest countries are going through and to the change in U.S. leadership.

"I would like it very much for Poland to be the country that will not only mark its presence all the time, but will also set the tone of the decisions that are to bring us security and safeguard Poland's interests," Tusk told a government meeting.

Israeli warplanes pound Syria as troops reportedly advance deeper into country

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP)—Israel carried out a wave of heavy airstrikes across Syria as its troops advanced deeper into the country, a Syrian opposition war monitor said Tuesday, and the Israeli defense minister announced that his forces had destroyed Syria's navy.

Israel acknowledged pushing into a buffer zone inside Syria following the overthrow of President Bashar Assad. But it remained unclear if Israeli soldiers had gone beyond that area, which was established more than 50 years ago. Israel denied that it was advancing on the Syrian capital of Damascus.

The Israeli military said Tuesday that it carried out more than 350 strikes in Syria over the last 48 hours, hitting "most of the strategic weapons stockpiles" in the country to stop them from falling into the hands of extremists.

The targets included air defense systems, military airfields, missile depots and dozens of weapons production sites in Damascus and other cities. Associated Press reporters in the capital heard heavy airstrikes overnight and into Tuesday morning.

Israeli missile ships also simultaneously struck two Syrian navy facilities, where the military said 15 Syrian naval vessels were docked. Israel did not specify how many vessels it struck, but the private security firm Ambrey said it had seen evidence that at least six Soviet-era missile ships were hit.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said Israel intended to establish a demilitarized zone in southern Syria.

Speaking at a navy base in Haifa, Katz said the army will create a "defense zone free of weapons and terrorist threats in southern Syria, without a permanent Israeli presence, in order to prevent terrorism in Syria from taking root."

He gave few details on what that entailed, but warned Syria's rebels that "whoever follows Assad's path will end up like Assad. We will not allow an extremist Islamic terrorist entity to act against Israel." Israel has also long warned that the Syria-Lebanon border could be used to smuggle weapons to Hezbollah militants.

In an area where so many geopolitical lines are packed closely together, any military movement can spark regional fears. It is barely 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Damascus to the buffer zone, and only a few more miles to Israeli territory.

There was no immediate comment from the insurgent groups — led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS – that have taken control of much of the country. Their lightning advance brought an end to the Assad family's half-century rule after nearly 14 years of civil war, leaving many questions about what comes next.

Members of the ousted Syrian government will gradually transfer power to a new transitional cabinet headed by Mohammed al-Bashir, who reportedly headed the rebel alliance's "salvation government" in its southwest Syrian stronghold.

Life & Style

Selena Gomez spotlights prioritizing mental health during Academy Women's Luncheon

LOS ANGELES (AP)—While surveying a room packed with Hollywood's most influential figures, "Emilia Pérez" star Selena Gomez took center stage to spotlight a critical issue: Prioritizing mental health and supporting underserved communities often left behind in the conversation.

"It's about taking action to ensure that underserved communities have access to mental health resources," Gomez said Tuesday at the Academy Women's Luncheon. The singer-actor has been public about her mental health struggles, revealing she had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

In 2020, Gomez started the Rare Impact Fund and her Rare Beauty line of cosmetics, pledging to donate 1% of all sales to the fund to help expand mental health services and education for young people.

"It's about showing them that when we come together, we can make a real difference," said Gomez, a Grammy and Emmy-nominated performer who became a Golden Globes double nominee Monday for her roles on "Emilia Pérez" and "Only Murders in the Building."

"I know firsthand how isolation can make you feel at times," she said. "But moments like this and talking to all these amazing women, it just reminds me that I'm not alone. We share. And when we stand together, we create a ripple effect that stretches far beyond our own lives.

AP

Selena Gomez attends the Academy Women's Luncheon on Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024, at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.

Gomez was the keynote speaker at the event held at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures with attendees including Ariana Grande, Olivia Wilde, Amy Adams, Pamela Anderson, Sarah Paulson, Regina King, Rita Wilson, Ava DuVernay and Awkwafina.

Gomez talked about the importance of amplifying women's voice and being proud while working on "Emilia Pérez," which she says featured "extraordinary" women from in front and behind the camera. She said the film's director, Jacques Audiard, fostered the idea that "every single voice is heard and valued."

"It reminded me of the power of community, supporting and lifting up each other—whether in film, music or life itself," she said.

Many actors in attendance dressed in Chanel clothing, jewelry, shoes, makeup and accessories. The luxury fashion brand, which sponsored the event, has had a long association with film and women creatives since founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel saw an opportunity to put her designs in the movies and empower women in film.

Tuesday's event was held to bring together women from all facets of the filmmaking community. It was also a celebration of the Academy Gold Fellowship, a program that supports emerging women filmmakers.

Gomez paid homage to the event for highlighting women filmmakers and the efforts behind creating resources for those in the fellowship.

"It is honestly such an honor to be in this room with so many women that I love and have inspired me throughout the years," she said. "They continue to empower me, not only in our industry, but around world."

Who is Tony Buzbee, lawyer suing Jay-Z as part of civil cases against Sean 'Diddy' Combs?

HOUSTON (AP)—High-profile legal battles are nothing new for Texas attorney Tony Buzbee, with his latest being a lawsuit he's filed against Jay-Z, accusing the iconic rapper as well as Sean "Diddy" Combs of sexually assaulting a minor at an awards show after-party in 2000.

The lawsuit against Jay-Z is part of a series of civil cases the Houston-based Buzbee has filed against Combs, who remains jailed in New York as he awaits trial on federal charges that he coerced and abused women for years.

In his legal career, Buzbee has represented a variety of clients. He helped acquit Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton at his impeachment trial in the Texas Senate last year. He represented more than two dozen women who accused Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson of sexual misconduct and assault. Buzbee has also made a couple of unsuccessful runs at elected office, including a bid to be Houston's mayor.

His critics say he's full of bluster and bombast. Jay-Z said the lawsuit against him is part of an extortion attempt. Buzbee's law firm has said he's worked to amplify the voices of the marginalized and to "pursue justice against powerful figures."

"We're a society where we typically don't believe the accuser. We blame the victim and by proxy we blame her lawyers," Buzbee said during a March 2021 news conference.

Here's what to know about Buzbee, his involvement in the lawsuits against Combs and what other cases he's handled.

Buzbee is a well-known name in Texas courtrooms who has won billions of dollars in settlements for his clients.

He grew up in northeast Texas, the son of a butcher and a high school cafeteria worker. After graduating from Texas A&M University, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps. Buzbee later went to law school and founded his own firm.

His style is "characterized by his aggressive legal tactics, his ability to command media attention and his knack for turning complex legal battles into public narratives that resonate with juries and the public alike," according to his law firm's website.

AP

Attorney Tony Buzbee speaks in the Senate Chamber at the Texas Capitol, Friday, Sept. 15, 2023, in Austin, Texas.

Buzbee has said his firm is representing more than 150 people, both men and women, who allege sexual abuse and exploitation at the hands of Combs.

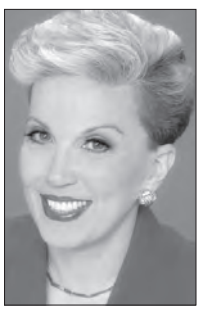
Buzbee's firm, which has set up a 1-800 number for accusers, has filed a wave of suits against the hip-hop mogul. Buzbee's lawsuits allege that many of the people he represents were abused at parties in New York, California and Florida where individuals were given drinks that were laced with drugs.

Combs' lawyers have dismissed Buzbee's lawsuits as "shameless publicity stunts, designed to extract payments from celebrities who fear having lies spread about them, just as lies have been spread about Mr. Combs."

On Sunday, Jay-Z issued a statement in which he accused Buzbee of trying to blackmail him by getting him to agree to a legal settlement over allegations he and Combs raped a woman when she was 13 years old.

Dating app disappointments fail to meet man's needs

DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: As a 22-year-old gay man, I have tried dating apps to no avail. One guy was 10 years older than me, ex-military (Air Force) and extremely clingy in the first few hours of texting. He said he was "deeply in love with me," "wanted a future with me," etc.

The other guys I tried talking to never tried to keep a conversation going. I don't know what to do. Some co-workers and friends I mentioned this to said I should look only at men of my race. I don't care about race. I have seen many men, regardless of race, be abusive to their partners.

I care about characteristics that make someone enjoyable to be around. What are their hobbies? What direction are they looking to take their career in? How do they operate in the kitchen? Do they keep things tidy? Also, I'm not much for parties, drinking and casual sex.

I would love to find a guy for me, but there aren't many LGBTQ areas where I am currently. I feel like I'm going to be alone for longer than I hope for. I'm trying to focus on school and work, but it would be nice to have a special someone. Any advice?

FAILING AT IT IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR FAILING: Make sure you aren't using dating apps that are geared toward hookups. Instead, look for those that are geared toward relationships. They are out there. Also, make it a priority to visit the nearest large city and go to the LGBTQ community center so you can meet new people with similar interests. While I can't guarantee you'll find romance, you may make some lasting friends.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have cared for my elderly mother in my home for 15 years. I have four brothers who live out of state. It is harder and harder for me emotionally to see Mom aging and the difficulties that come with it. My brothers don't call or visit often. I repeatedly remind them to call Mom regularly because she needs contact, but time and time again they fail us. We are five hours away, but they visit only once or twice a year.

In three months, I will be retiring early so I can move back to their state to be closer to them and Mom can see them and her many grandkids and great-grandkids more often. How do I stop resenting them for not stepping up? I love Mom and have sacrificed so much with pleasure, but I expected others to do better.

DISAPPOINTED BROTHER IN MISSOURI

DEAR BROTHER: I understand your disappointment, but have you considered that your brothers may have circumstances in their lives that occupy their attention such as wives, families and jobs which prevent their being as present in their mother's life as you have been? Calm your anger. The move you are making may enable them -- and their wives and children—to spend more time with her. Before you relocate, however, this is something you should discuss fully with your siblings to ensure that what you are hoping for will happen.

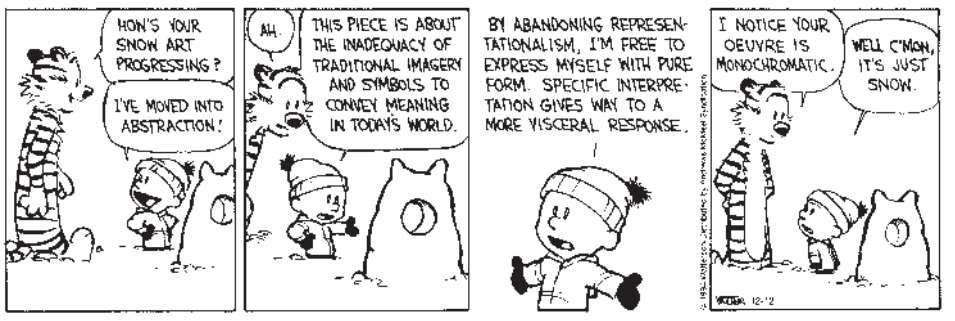
■■■

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HON'S YOUR SNOW ART PROGRESSING?
I'VE MOVED INTO ABSTRACTION!
AH.
THIS PIECE IS ABOUT THE INADEQUACY OF TRADITIONAL IMAGERY AND SYMBOLS TO CONVEY MEANING IN TODAY'S WORLD.
BY ABANDONING REPRESENTATIONALISM, I'M FREE TO EXPRESS MYSELF WITH PURE FORM. SPECIFIC INTERPRETATION GIVES WAY TO A MORE VISCERAL RESPONSE.
I NOTICE YOUR OEUVRE IS MONOCHROMATIC.
WELL C'MON, IT'S JUST SNOW.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

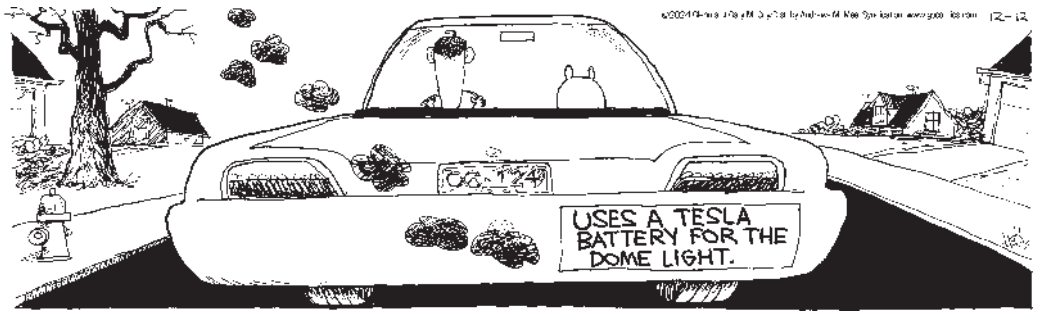
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

HAVE YOU BEEN BEING GOOD?
YEP. STARTED ON DECEMBER FIRST.
UM... I ACTUALLY THINK SANTA PAYS ATTENTION ALL YEAR.
I THINK I BROKE KATY.
BROKE HER LIKE A WILD STALLION, OR THE BAD KIND?

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Bath powder
5 Snoop
8 Has
12 "The Time Machine" people
13 Chowed down
14 Leak out slowly
15 Starting quartet
16 Logical beginning?
17 Entreaty
18 Get by
20 Planets
22 Knock
23 Fresh
24 Life stories
27 Nudniks
32 Request
33 — long way
34 Brit's restroom
35 Raze
38 Lost traction
39 One of us
40 Actress Thurman
42 Rain makers?
45 Maidens of myth
49 Erstwhile acorns
50 WNBA star — Wilson
52 Borscht veggie
53 Latin 101 word
54 Campaigned
55 Farm measure
56 Sets (down)
57 — Dhabi
58 Distort

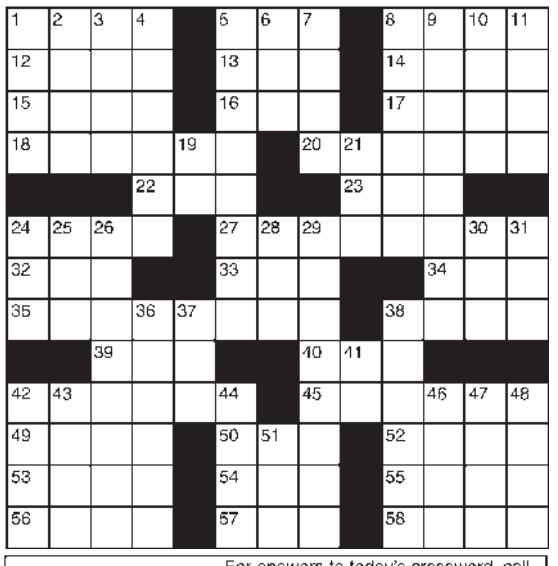
DOWN

1 Squad
2 Actress Jessica
3 Canal feature
4 Autumnal drinks
5 Samoan port
6 Numbered rd.
7 Cry of pain
8 Fish-eating hawk
9 "Oho!"
10 Must have
11 Relaxing resorts
19 Opposite of nyet
21 Lennon's partner
24 Belfry critter
25 British verb ending
26 "I heard you the first time!"
28 At once
29 Mork's sign-off
30 French monarch
31 Turf
36 Awakens harshly
37 Flop
38 Brazilian dances
41 "Heavens!"
42 Furnace fuel
43 Tibetan monk
44 Country singer Evans
46 Quick kiss
47 "Present!"
48 Hearty dish
51 Poke

Solution time: 24 mins.

P	I	M	A		P	A	M		I	B	S	P
E	R	I	N		I	M	O		B	A	I	E
C	O	C	K	A	T	O	O		A	L	A	N
S	N	E	A	K			S	T	I	L	T	S
			R	A	S	H		A	N	Y		
P	A	P	A		P	E	S	O		H	A	M
E	R	E		P	O	L	O	S		O	N	E
W	E	E		U	T	E	S		M	O	A	T
		K	A	L		N	O	P	E			
S	C	A	M	P	I				I	N	E	R	T
A	B	B	A		K	A	N	G	A	R	O	O
L	E	O	S		E	C	O		G	M	E	N
E	R	O	S		A	L	T		E	A	T	S

Yesterday's answer 12-12



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mayim Bialik, 49; Madchen Amick, 54; Regina Hall, 54; Jennifer Connelly, 54.

Happy Birthday: Socialize with people you want to do business with, and you'll establish a rapport that will help you expand your circle and build a solid coalition with those you want on your team. Make this a year of progress, learning and incorporating what you want into your everyday routine. Say no to choices that are dominated by debt. Your aim this year is to lower pressure and maintain peace. Your numbers are 5, 13, 21, 30, 39, 44, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Sign up for something of interest or donate your time or items you no longer need to an organization you want to help. How you delegate time and money will make a difference to those whom you encounter, what you learn and the direction you choose to pursue next. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Spend time revising how you do things. Base your success on how you feel and let go of pastimes and people who have drained you mentally, physically or financially. It's time to put yourself first and use your energy for self-improvement and a peaceful lifestyle. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Embrace those who have something you want to offer. The more you communicate and engage in events that spark your interest, the easier it will be to position yourself for success. Take the plunge and try something encouraging better health, fitness and lifestyle. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Incorporate something unique into whatever job you pursue, and you'll stand out and make an impression on someone in a position to help you advance. Be wary of anyone trying to undermine or interfere in your business or personal life. Avoid frivolous expenditures and joint ventures. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Put your head down and focus on your objective. Refuse to let anyone talk or guilt you into something that doesn't fit your schedule or budget. Put your energy where it brings the highest return and self-improvement; nurturing meaningful relationships and personal gains will benefit you. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Trouble will surface unless you abide by the rules and stay on budget. Take stock and consider what you can sell that may ultimately save you money. Learn to say no and set boundaries with those who are a terrible influence. Travel and reunions are favored. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Book your plans to travel or visit loved ones in advance. Express your feelings and make gestures that leave nothing to chance. You'll discover something you didn't know about someone you love. Avoid a problem with joint ventures or shared expenses by taking the necessary precautions. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* An opportunity is worthwhile only if it fits your budget and obligations. Scope out the possibilities and designate a plan that offers hope for a brighter future. Refuse to argue over something you cannot change. Know when to back away and do your own thing. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Do your due diligence when making arrangements that include a costly price tag. Nothing is worth the worry of going into debt unnecessarily. When in doubt, know enough to decline and walk away. Work alone to get things done at a cost you can afford. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Gravitate toward change that excites you and events that allow you to explore new possibilities. Rearrange your calendar to ensure you can attend lectures or demonstrations that can help you make transitioning to a healthy and happy lifestyle easier. A change of heart will lead to a new adventure. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Press play and be on your way. Participating in festive events or preparing your surroundings for upcoming activities will get you in the spirit of the season. Refuse to let outsiders criticize you for the choices you make. Follow your heart and live life your way. Personal growth is favored. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Get serious and get things done. How you handle matters that involve friends, family or associates will determine how well you are received when a new era comes into play. If change excites you, do your due diligence and explore the possibilities. Once you feel confident, make your move. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are open-minded, perceptive and imaginative. You are considerate and unique.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	6				3	7		
							2	
7		1	5		9		8	3
		8			6		4	
	5			1	7	9	3	
	9							
	2	5				3		4
		3				5		6
		7			5	8		2

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/12

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	2	7	4	3	9	8	1	6
8	1	4	7	2	6	5	3	9
6	9	3	8	5	1	4	7	2
9	5	6	2	7	4	1	8	3
3	8	2	6	1	5	7	9	4
7	4	1	9	8	3	6	2	5
1	7	9	5	6	2	3	4	8
4	6	8	3	9	7	2	5	1
2	3	5	1	4	8	9	6	7

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/11

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

OUTDOOR XMAS TREE LIGHTS Solution: 5 letters

T	G	E	G	N	A	H	C	R	O	P	O	W	E	R
H	N	I	O	J	Y	G	R	E	N	E	D	L	O	G
G	I	E	P	G	I	F	T	S	E	U	L	B	A	N
I	R	R	C	R	E	O	I	T	A	P	H	R	E	I
E	T	E	E	S	O	D	R	A	Y	G	L	D	N	L
H	S	N	T	I	E	C	L	R	I	A	A	W	E	I
F	A	I	R	Y	N	D	E	E	N	C	O	S	E	A
U	V	H	U	N	G	D	N	D	S	L	T	E	R	R
E	B	S	W	O	B	F	E	A	G	A	R	A	G	E
L	U	F	R	O	L	O	C	E	C	F	I	S	R	D
E	L	H	T	A	E	R	W	G	R	N	M	O	E	D
A	B	G	S	N	E	D	R	A	G	E	I	N	T	A
V	S	H	O	L	L	Y	M	T	C	O	R	D	N	L
E	I	C	I	C	L	E	S	E	N	O	C	I	I	S
S	T	N	A	L	P	A	R	W	I	N	D	O	W	S

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Blue, Bows, Bulbs, Cascade, Change, Colorful, Cones, Cord, Décor, Energy, Fairy, Festive, Flash, Frame, Garage, Garden, Garland, Gate, Gifts, Glow, Golden, Green, Height, Holly, Hung, Icicle, Incandescent, Join, Ladder, Leaves, Neighbor, Patio, Plants, Porch, Power, Railing, Reindeer, Season, Shine, Star, String, Trim, Windows, Winter, Wire, Wrap, Wreath, Yard

Yesterday's Answer: Los Angeles

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

Bucks beat Magic to return to the NBA Cup semifinals

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 37 points, Damian Lillard had nine of his 28 in the final minute and the Milwaukee Bucks returned to the NBA Cup semifinals in Las Vegas by beating the Orlando Magic 114-109 on Tuesday night.

Milwaukee reached the semifinals of the in-season tournament in Las Vegas last December and will be the only returning team in Year 2. They will play Saturday against the winner of Wednesday's quarterfinal between the New York Knicks and Atlanta Hawks.

Jalen Suggs led a shorthanded Orlando team with 32 points but missed a potential go-ahead 3-pointer with 12 seconds left. Lillard was fouled and sank two free throws with 9.1 seconds remaining and Suggs missed a potential tying 3.

Antetokounmpo then made both free throws with 5 seconds left and the Bucks held on.

The Magic were missing forwards Paolo Banchero (torn right oblique), Jonathan Isaac (right hamstring strain) and Franz Wagner, who suffered a torn right oblique on Friday against Philadelphia; along with guard Gary Harris (left hamstring strain).

Orlando's bench scored 28 points in the first half, including 13 by Moritz Wagner and 10 from Anthony Black. But Wagner did not score in the second half.

AP

Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo reacts after a dunk during the second half of an Emirates NBA cup tournament quarterfinals basketball game against the Orlando Magic Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024, in Milwaukee.

Bobby Portis helped the Bucks erase an early 11-point deficit as he hit his first seven shots and scored 16 points in the first half. He finished with 22 points and 10 rebounds.

Bucks forward Khris Middleton registered three consecutive assists—the first two on passes to Antetokounmpo and the third to set up a 3-pointer by Gary Trent Jr—as the Bucks took a 78-70 lead as part of an 11-0 Milwaukee run. Middleton did not score but had eight assists.

Antetokounmpo extended his streak to 22 straight games with 20 or more points on 50% shooting, the longest streak to open a season in league history and the third-longest at any point in a season (Shaquille O'Neal and Zion Williamson, both 25 games). Antetokounmpo was 15 of 24 from the field.

THUNDER 118, MAVERICKS 104

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 39 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Dallas Mavericks 118-104 on Tuesday night in an NBA Cup quarterfinal.

Jalen Williams scored 18 points and Isaiah Hartenstein added 10 points and 13 rebounds for the Thunder, who will play Wednesday's Golden State-Houston winner in a semifinal on Saturday in Las Vegas.

Oklahoma City's largest lead was 20 points in a rematch of last season's Western Conference semifinals series that Dallas won 4-2.

The Thunder and their collection of elite perimeter defenders held Luka Doncic to 16 points on 5-for-15 shooting. Lu Dort led the effort, with Alex Caruso and Cason Wallace among the primary helpers.

Naji Marshall and Klay Thompson each scored 19 points and Kyrie Irving added 17 for the Mavericks.

P.J. Washington, a thorn in Oklahoma City's side during the playoffs last season and in Dallas' victory last month, missed the game with an illness.

Oklahoma City led 57-54 at halftime behind 18 points from Gilgeous-Alexander. Doncic had two points on 1-for-7 shooting at the break.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 16 points on 7-for-8 shooting in the third quarter to help the Thunder take control. Isaiah Joe's deep 3-pointer at the buzzer gave Oklahoma City a 90-73 lead heading into the fourth.

Dallas made too many mistakes to have a chance. The Thunder scored 36 points off the Mavericks' 19 turnovers.

Thunder: Oklahoma City brought in the 7-foot, 255-pound Hartenstein as a free agent in the offseason to provide bulk and rebounding. It paid off—the Thunder outrebounded the Mavericks 52-44.

Oklahoma City opened the second half on a 13-2 run. Gilgeous-Alexander scored nine points during that stretch to help the Thunder take a 70-56 lead.

The Mavericks made just 6 of 19 field goals in the third quarter after shooting 50% from the field in the first half.

Mavericks will host the Los Angeles Clippers on Dec. 19, while the Thunder will play Golden State or Houston in the NBA Cup semifinals Saturday in Las Vegas.

Analysis: Cavs, Magic, Rockets off to surprise starts. Maybe that shouldn't be surprising

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

There was a conversation Cleveland guard Donovan Mitchell had during training camp, the topic being all the teams that were generating the most preseason buzz in the Eastern Conference. Boston was coming off an NBA championship. New York got Karl-Anthony Towns. Philadelphia added Paul George.

The Cavs? Not a big topic in early October. And Mitchell fully understood why.

"What have we done?" Mitchell asked. "They don't talk about us. That's fine. We'll just hold ourselves to our standard."

That approach seems to be working.

For the first time in 36 seasons—yes, even before the LeBron James eras in Cleveland—the Cavaliers are atop the NBA at the 25-game mark. They're 21-4, having come back to earth a bit following a 15-0 start but still better than anyone in the league at this point.

"We've kept our standards pretty high," Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said. "And we keep it going."

The Cavs are just one of the surprise stories that have emerged as the season nears the one-third-done mark. Orlando—the only team still unbeaten at home—is off to its best start in 16 years at 17-9 and having done most of that without All-Star forward Paolo Banchero. And Houston is 16-8, behind only the Cavs, Boston, Oklahoma City and Memphis so far in the race for the league's best record.

Cleveland was a playoff team a year ago, as was Orlando. And the Rockets planted seeds for improvement last year as well; an 11-game winning streak late in the season fueled a push where they finished 41-41 in a major step forward after a few years of rebuilding.

"We kind of set that foundation last year to compete with everybody," Rockets coach Ime Udoka said. "Obviously, we had some ups and downs with winning and losing streaks at times, but to finish the season the way we did, getting to .500, 11-game winning streak and some close losses against high-level playoff teams, I think we kind of proved that to ourselves last year that that's who we're going to be."

A sign of the respect the Rockets are getting: Oddsmakers at BetMGM Scorebook have made them a favorite in 17 of 24 games so far this season, after favoring them only 30 times in 82 games last season.

"Based on coaches, players, GMs, people that we all know what they're saying, it seems like everybody else is taking notice as well," Udoka said.

They're taking notice of Orlando as well. The Magic lost their best player and haven't skipped a beat.

Banchero's injury after five games figured to doom Orlando for a while, and the Magic went 0-4 immediately after he tore his oblique. Entering Tuesday, they're 14-3 since—and now have to regroup yet again. Franz Wagner stepped into the best-player-on-team role when Banchero got hurt, and now Wagner is going to miss several weeks with the exact same injury.

AP

Cleveland Cavaliers head coach Kenny Atkinson, right, speaks with referee Natalie Sago (9) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Cleveland, Sunday, Nov 17, 2024.

Ask Magic coach Jamahl Mosley how the team has persevered, and he'll quickly credit everyone but himself. Around the league, it's Mosley getting a ton of the credit—and rightly so—for what Orlando is doing.

"I think that has to do a lot with Mose. ... I have known him a long time," Phoenix guard Bradley Beal said. "A huge fan of his and what he is doing. It is a testament to him and the way they've built this team."

The Magic know better than most how good Cleveland is, and vice versa. The teams went seven games in an Eastern Conference first-round series last spring, the Cavs winning the finale at home to advance to Round 2.

Atkinson was brought in by Cleveland to try and turn good into great. The job isn't anywhere near finished—nobody is raising any banners for "best record after 25 games"—but Atkinson realized fairly early that this Cavs team has serious potential.

"We're so caught up in like the process of improve, improve, improve each game, improve each practice," Atkinson said. "That's kind of my philosophy. But then you hit 10-0, and obviously the media starts talking and all that, and you're like, 'Man, this could be something special brewing here.'"

After Juan Soto's megadeal, could MLB see a $1B contract?

By DAVID BRANDT
AP Baseball Writer

AP

New York Yankees' Juan Soto talks with agent Scott Boras before Game 1 of the baseball World Series against the Los Angeles Dodgers, Friday, Oct. 25, 2024, in Los Angeles.

For the second straight Major League Baseball offseason, a norm-shattering contract has been the talk of the winter, with Juan Soto agreeing with the New York Mets on a $765 million, 15-year deal that's the richest in baseball history.

It comes almost exactly one year after the Los Angeles Dodgers forked out a princely sum of $700 million on a 10-year, heavily deferred deal for two-way Japanese superstar Shohei Ohtani. They are believed to be the two richest contracts in pro sports history.

The way it's going, a contract approaching $1 billion doesn't seem out of the question.

But several factors are working against it—at least in the near future.

There's reason to believe the megadeals for Ohtani and Soto are unicorns in the baseball world. Both players are uniquely talented, surely, but both also had unusual circumstances propelling their value into the stratosphere.

Ohtani is the greatest two-way player in baseball history, capable of improving any team on both sides of the ball. He's also the rare baseball player who has true international appeal. His every move (like his unexpected marriage announcement) is followed closely in his native Japan, adding another 125 million potential fans who buy merchandise, watch him play and help fill the Dodgers' coffers.

Then there's Soto — a four-time All-Star and on-base machine who won a World Series with the Washington Nationals in 2019. The X-factor for him is he became a free agent at the prime age of 26, which is extremely hard to do under current MLB rules.

Players have to be in the big leagues for six years before testing free agency. The precocious Soto debuted at 19 with the Nats, making him part of a rare group of players who reached the highest level of professional baseball as a teenager. That accelerated his free agency timeline.

It's rare for players to debut that young, and rarer still for them to develop into stars and test the open market the first chance they get. Two recent examples are Manny Machado and Bryce Harper, who both reached free agency in 2019. Machado signed a free-agent record $300 million contract with San Diego, and Harper overtook him days later with a $330 million contract to join the Phillies.

Most players debut in the big leagues from ages 22 to 26, which means free agency comes in their late 20s or early 30s. A typical example is Yankees slugger Aaron Judge, who is one of this generation's great players but didn't hit the market until he was 30.

» Probably not soon

Judge played three seasons of college baseball for Fresno State before getting drafted by the Yankees in 2013 at age 21—already two years older than Soto was when he made his MLB debut. It took a few years for the budding superstar to reach the majors, and he was 25 when he had his breakout season in 2018, smashing 52 homers to earn AL Rookie of the Year honors.

By the time he reached free agency after the 2022 season, he had already passed age 30. It's a major factor that led to him signing a $360 million, nine-year deal with the Yankees, which seems downright reasonable these days after the Ohtani and Soto deals.

Two major trends are colliding that will make it harder for guys like Soto to hit free agency in their mid 20s.

First, MLB teams have been more likely in recent years to take college players early in the draft, betting on more experienced talents. Just 10 high school players were drafted among the top 30 picks in the 2024 draft.

Second, teams are more eager to lock up young, premium talent on long-term deals very early in their careers, well before they hit free agency. Sometimes before they even reach the majors.

Since Soto, just two players have debuted in MLB before their 20th birthday—Elvis Luciano and Junior Caminero. Luciano hasn't been back to the majors since his 2019 cup of coffee. Caminero is now 21 and has only played in 50 big league games.

Among those that debuted at 20: Fernando Tatis Jr. signed a $340 million, 14-year deal with San Diego in 2021, years before reaching the open market. Milwaukee's Jackson Chourio got an $82 million, eight-year deal before even reaching the big leagues.

Young stars Corbin Carroll ($111 million, eight years with Arizona), Bobby Witt Jr. ($288 million, 11 years with Kansas City) and Julio Rodriguez ($209.3 million, 12 years with Seattle) also got massive guarantees early in their 20s to forgo an early free agency.

The exception and wild card: Blue Jays slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr. will be a 26-year-old free agent next offseason. Guerrero hasn't been as consistent in his young career as Soto, but a standout 2025 season could position him to threaten Soto's deal.

More likely is that the player to pass Soto isn't in the majors yet—and might not even be in pro baseball. When 25-year-old Alex Rodriguez signed his record $252 million, 10-year deal with Texas in 2001, it took over a decade for another player to match that total, when Albert Pujols got $240 million over 10 years from the Angels in 2012.

For many players, passing up life-changing money in their early or mid 20s is too enticing, even if it means that they might not maximize their value on the free agent market later in their careers.

Soto was determined to test the market. He famously turned down a $440 million, 15-year offer to stay with the Washington Nationals in 2022, betting that he could make even more as a free agent.

Not many players would turn down that kind of cash.

Then again, that's what makes Soto so unique. And it's also why his $765 million deal could be the industry standard for some time.

Roki Sasaki bidding among MLB teams will start Tuesday and run until Jan. 23

DALLAS (AP)—Hard-throwing Japanese right-hander Roki Sasaki was posted to Major League Baseball teams and will be available to sign as a free agent from Tuesday through 5 p.m. Eastern on Jan. 23.

The Chiba Lotte Marines said Nov. 9 that they planned to make the 23-year-old Sasaki available but waited until less than a week before the end of the posting period.

Because he is 23, Sasaki is considered an international amateur by MLB and is limited to a minor league contract subject to the international signing bonus pools usually allocated for 16-year-old Latin American prospects. The 2024 signing period ends Sunday and the 2025 period opens on Jan. 15, with team pools ranging from $7,555,500 to $5,146,200.

Teams may trade for additional pool allotment in $250,000 increments starting Jan. 15 but are limited to adding 60% of their initial amount.

"I feel like the organization is in a really good place with Sasaki," San Diego manager Mike Schildt said.

He cited general manager A.J. Preller learning Japanese and recruiting pitcher Yu Darvish ahead of the 2021 season, and Hideo Nomo working for San Diego as an adviser.

"It's a chance for him to come in and create a legacy for himself to help win the first World Series," Shildt said. "We got all these different things that are in our court that allow us to have a real competitive opportunity to get him to be a Padre."

Chiba will receive a posting fee from the acquiring MLB team equal to 25% of the signing bonus.

When Shohei Ohtani agreed to join the Los Angeles Angels in December 2016 at age 23, he received a $2,315,000 signing bonus. Ohtani had salaries of $545,000, $650,000 and $259,259 (in pandemic-shortened 2020) during his first three seasons, earned $3 million, $5.5 million and $30 million in his three years of arbitration eligibility and then agreed to a record $700 million, 10-year contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers ahead of the 2024 season.

Sasaki is represented by Joel Wolfe of Wasserman Media Group and is expected to become one of the most sought-after pitchers on the market. He went 10-5 with a 2.35 ERA in 18 games this year, striking out 129 hitters in 111 innings.

Sasaki helped Japan win the 2023 World Baseball Classic. His fastball has been clocked at 102.5 mph, and he has a 29-15 career record with a 2.10 ERA over four injury-shortened seasons with the Marines.

"I've gotten a chance to watch him a little bit, bits and pieces," Arizona manager Torey Lovuillo said. "I was telling somebody, yeah, it's a lot of fastball. It's a swing-and-miss split. He's going to be a really good starter here immediately. I've been very impressed by what I've seen so far."

Sasaki pitched a perfect game against the Orix Buffaloes in April 2022—racking up 13 straight strikeouts and finishing with 19.

"Since I joined the team, the team has been listening to my thoughts about my future MLB challenge, and I am very grateful to the team for officially allowing me to post," Sasaki said in a Nov. 9 statement posted by the Marines on the social platform X.

"There were many things that did not go well during my five years with the Marines, but I was able to get to this point by concentrating only on baseball, with the support of my teammates, staff, front office, and fans. I will do my best to work my way up from my minor contract to become the best player in the world, so that I will have no regrets in my one and only baseball career and live up to the expectations of everyone who has supported me."

The Athletics, Cincinnati, Detroit, Miami, Milwaukee, Minnesota, Seattle and Tampa Bay enter the international signing period with $7,555,500 available for each.

Arizona, Baltimore, Cleveland, Colorado, Kansas City and Pittsburgh have $6,908,600 apiece, followed by Atlanta, Boston, the Chicago Cubs and White Sox, the Los Angeles Angels, New York Mets and Yankees, Philadelphia, San Diego, Texas, Toronto and Washington at $6,261,600.

Houston and St. Louis each have $5,646,200, and the Dodgers and San Francisco have $5,146,200.

Brotherly gripe? Eagles can fix any issues with one breakout passing game

By ROB MAADDI
AP Pro Football Writer

The Philadelphia Eagles have to make sure they don't beat themselves.

A nine-game winning streak helped the Eagles (11-2) clinch their fourth consecutive playoff berth. They're seeking an NFC East title and still have a chance at catching Detroit (12-1) for the NFC's No. 1 seed.

But an ugly win over Carolina in which Jalen Hurts only threw 21 passes for 108 yards left wide receivers A.J. Brown and DeVonta Smith in a bad mood. He made it clear the offense, specifically the passing attack, wasn't playing up to standard.

He's right. Hurts has thrown for fewer than 200 yards in three straight games. But Saquon Barkley is running at a record-setting pace so the Eagles haven't had to rely on Hurts throwing to Brown and Smith as much as they have in the past.

Brown caught four passes on four targets for 43 yards while Smith had four catches on six targets for 37 yards and one touchdown against the Panthers.

That led to Brown bluntly responding "passing" when asked by a reporter after the game what needs improvement.

Veteran leader Brandon Graham added fuel to the drama on his radio show Monday night by implying there's friction between Brown and Hurts. The two were close friends long before they became teammates and Hurts is the godfather for Brown's daughter.

"The person that's complaining (needs) to be accountable," Graham said of Brown. "I'm just being honest. ... Like and he (knows) this. I don't know the whole story, but I know that (Hurts) is trying. And I mean, (Brown) could be a little better with how he responds to things and they were friends before this. It's like, man, but things have changed, and I understand that because life happens, but we gotta — it's the business side that we have to make sure that we don't let the personal get in the way of the business and that's what we gotta do better at right now because we know it's the issue.

"Everybody is saying some things, but we need to be able to talk things out as men, you know what I'm saying? But, we need to let personal stuff go and let's get right for this game because man, it's like most of the time it's just a conversation that just (needs) to be had, but the person with the problem (has) to want to talk to the person other than others. That's all I'm saying."

AP

Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver A.J. Brown (11) celebrates with quarterback Jalen Hurts (1) during the second half of an NFL football game against the Los Angeles Rams in Inglewood, Calif., Sunday, Nov. 24, 2024.

Graham, who is sidelined with a triceps injury, clarified his comments later to an ESPN reporter, saying he made the wrong assumption about the relationship between Hurts and Brown and planned to apologize to both players.

But the damage was done.

Or was it?

While social media ran wild with news there's more trouble in Philadelphia, the Eagles have been here before. They fell apart last year after a 10-1 start, dropping six of their final seven games, including a lopsided loss in the playoffs to Tampa Bay.

There were questions about Hurts' leadership, his relationship to teammates and the team's locker room dynamic. Plus, coach Nick Sirianni was harshly criticized for the team's failures.

They overcame a tumultuous offseason and are 11-2 and in position to make a Super Bowl run.

All they have to do is get along, put the team first and focus on the overall goal of winning a championship instead of pouting about individual statistics.

One breakout passing game can change everything.

Belichick's future

Bill Belichick can't break Don Shula's all-time NFL wins record coaching in college.

Whether his interest in the vacancy at the University of North Carolina is genuine or not, it doesn't change the fact that he has to return to the NFL to become the winningest coach in league history.

The biggest question is whether he'll get that opportunity. Belichick only interviewed with Atlanta out of eight coaching vacancies last season.

Belichick, who led the New England Patriots to six Super Bowl titles with Tom Brady, needs to win 27 more games to break Shula's record for most regular-season victories. He's 15 wins away from passing Shula for all-time victories, including the postseason.

The 72-year-old Belichick explained on ESPN's "The Pat McAfee Show," how he would approach a college job.

PAIRE

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the match, giving her team a 1-0 lead. However, Kanoa refused to settle for being mere subjects in the finals. Mariquit Chavez leveled the playing field in the 25th minute, making it 1-1.

The draw held as both teams turned the season's final matchup into a fierce battle for dominion, each side trading blows like kingdoms at war.

Finally, Natalie Hill-Beyer of Paire broke through Kanoa's defenses in the 40th minute to regain the lead, 2-1. From there, Hill-Beyer asserted her rule over the pitch, doubling her tally in the 56th minute to extend the lead to 3-1. Lindsay Davis delivered the final blow in the 60th minute, sealing the game at 4-1.

Despite Kanoa's best efforts to rally and reclaim the lead, they fell to their knees as time ran out. Paire ascended their throne after the final whistle, cementing their legacy as champions.

Paire's right midfielder Patricia Coleman said of their finals, "Kanoa did a great job and held us to a draw for a significant part of the match." She added, "I'm proud of our team for remaining in a positive head space the entire match. Maria Ornes is a fantastic captain!"

She then said, "a huge thanks to chairwoman [Catherine] Attao-Toves and the Women's Committee for doing an excellent job collaboratively organizing the season! We also appreciate the referees!"

Aside from Coleman, Paire included Lindsay Davis, Arielle Buyum, Natalie Hill-Beyer, Marisol Ladino, Terra Allen, Amanda Dunn, Rhonda Gross, April Liske-Clark, Angie Mister, Maria Ornes, Angela Ruiz, and Shawna Brennfleck.

The Fairplay Award was given to Kanoa's keeper Christy Villaflor for her sportsmanship on and off the pitch.

Third place was Latte FC after they blanked Matansa FC, 1-0.

AMIGAS

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wrapped it up with five more runs in the last inning for a 14-3 final.

In their second game, Man Amigas drenched Wettz, 20-4.

It was another slugfest for the Amigas which began in the first inning from consecutive runs scored by Kianu Aldan, Bexx Repeki, and Tal Obakrairur for an early 3-0 lead.

Wettz couldn't handle Maratita who was still on fire on the mound and left them scoreless after three innings. Man Amigas on the other hand, scored three more in the third for a huge 6-0 lead, and it only widened from there as they broke down Wettz pitching in the last inning.

The whole Man Amigas roster rounded the bases—twice for Aldan, Obakrairur, and Maratita and once the dust settled, they were up, 20-2. Wettz was far too behind to even concoct a comeback and snuck in just two more runs in their last at-bat for a 20-4 final.

In other results that day, Batties slipped past the Lady Blue Jays, 13-11; Lady Blue Jays snagged a game against Dirty Diamonds, 21-3; Batties won over 670 BFF, 7-5; and 670 BFF defeated Wettz, 17-7.

Next Saturday is the last day of regular season games, with the playoffs to follow after.

CAGE

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Jaziah Camacho (Ind.) vs. Lorenzo Reyes (Trench Tech)—MMA.

And in the 131-140 lbs. bantamweight, the fights are Mark Andrew Janota (Latte Built) vs. Ram "Korean Blood" Lee (Trench Tech)—boxing; Salvatore Gotti (Latte Built) vs. Cody "Cage" Palacios (TrenchTech)—boxing; and Boom Taitano (Ind.) vs. Joaquin Deleon Guerrero (MCAMMA/PRIMEVIL)—MMA.

The main card of three three-minute rounds included Saips Thuy (MCAMMA/PRIMEVIL) vs. Johnny Bonez Lee (GuamMuayThai)—kickboxing.

A rematch in the 14l-150 lbs. featherweight division features Ethan Sanchez (GuamMMAClub) vs. Bradley Manalo (Spike 22)—MMA.

The featured bouts between Guam and Saipan in the 121-130 lbs. MMA division is Ethan Aflleje (ThaYard Fitness/Benavente Striking Academy) vs. Jadrien Camacho (Ind.). In the 151-160 lbs. lightweight, it's Hila'an San Nicolas (GuamMuayThai) vs. Teipo Asep (Latte Built) K1; and Clarence Cabrera (Ind.) vs. Brendon Manglona (LutaTopTeam)—MMA.

In the Guam vs. Luta super fight, it features Curt Aflleje (BeneventeStriking/ThaYard Fitness) vs. Vander Meyers (Luta) 141-150 lbs.—MMA; in the 186-205 lbs. light heavyweight, it's Tyron "Halfbreed" Tamuda (DreeTeam) vs. Rickson Mensor (Ind.)—kickboxing.

As for the semi-main event of three five-minute rounds, it's Jesus Norita (MMA) vs. Dylan Benavente (Benavente Striking Academy)—MMA.

Lastly, the main event of three-five minute rounds in the 131-140 lbs.—MMA, features Keith Sablan (Benavente Striking Academy) vs. Derrik "El Peligro" Rangamar (Marianas Elite).

There is one standby fighter, Austin Arriola (independent).

The fight card is subject to change.

The official weigh-ins and rules briefing will be held this Friday, Dec. 13, from 6pm to 7pm at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse.

The event sponsors are Miller Lite and Monster Energy, Hafa Adai Rent A Car, Century Hotel and Fökai Industries.

Trench Tech Purebred Purebred Promotions' Cuki Alvarez said that this event "is the first time in almost six years that we are finally using the octagon again and having MMA matches."

Last December, they broke through the pandemic-induced hiatus with the "Ring of Fire" that featured kickboxing and boxing events.

He said of the 21 bouts, "All of the bouts are guaranteed to be bangers! I personally love watching the prelim matchups! The first timers are always scrappy, which makes for exciting fights. Of course, all the Guam vs. Saipan bouts will be the ones to watch, especially the co-main and main events!"

Looking forward, Alvarez said this is the first of many Cage of Fire events to come. "As everyone knows, we first used the octagon in 2006 when we opened MMA here in the islands with our Rites of Passage and TrenchWarz events."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	19	5	.792	–
New York	15	9	.625	4
Brooklyn	10	14	.417	9
Philadelphia	7	15	.318	11
Toronto	7	18	.280	12½
Southeast Division				
Orlando	17	10	.630	–
Miami	12	10	.545	2½
Atlanta	13	12	.520	3
Charlotte	7	17	.292	8½
Washington	3	19	.136	11½
Central Division				
Cleveland	21	4	.840	–
Milwaukee	13	11	.542	7½
Indiana	10	15	.400	11
Chicago	10	15	.400	11
Detroit	10	15	.400	11

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	17	8	.680	–
Houston	16	8	.667	½
Dallas	16	9	.640	1
San Antonio	12	12	.500	4½
New Orleans	5	20	.200	12
Northwest Division				
Oklahoma City	19	5	.792	–
Denver	12	10	.545	6
Minnesota	12	11	.522	6½
Portland	8	16	.333	11
Utah	5	18	.217	13½
Pacific Division				
Golden State	14	9	.609	–
L.A. Clippers	14	11	.560	1
L.A. Lakers	13	11	.542	1½
Phoenix	12	11	.522	2
Sacramento	12	13	.480	3

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bucks beat Magic to return to the NBA Cup semifinals

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Sports

Brotherly gripe? Eagles can fix any issues with one breakout passing game

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Paire reigns supreme in Dove Masters division

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Paire Football Club secured their kingdom in the soccer realm, reigning supreme in the finals against Kanoa FC, 4-1, in the 2024 Fall Dove Women's League Masters Division last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

It was a spectacle of regal brilliance and exceptional skill as both teams duked it out on the pitch for the coveted title.

Paire boasted an undefeated record of eight wins in the regular season and carried their excellence into the playoffs. Under the setting sky over Koblerville, they shone as brightly as ever, showcasing their dominance early.

Paire's Shawna Brennfleck scored a goal 15 minutes into

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NMIFA

Champion Paire Football Club poses for a group photo during the awards ceremony of the 2024 Fall Dove Women's League Masters Division last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

NMIFA

Runner-up Kanoa Football Club poses for a group photo along with Fair Play awardee Christy Villaflor, with trophy, during the awards ceremony of the 2024 Fall Dove Women's League Masters Division last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

8 straight for Man Amigas

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The undefeated Man Amigas have won eight straight in the NMI Softball Association Women's League 2024 after their back-to-back games last Saturday at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Softball Field.

The Man Amigas roster is stacked with players from the NMI Women's National Fastpitch Softball Team who competed in the 2024 Micronesian Games, and they capitalized on their chemistry and training, which has seamlessly translated into this league.

Last Saturday's format was back-to-back games for each of the league's six teams, with Man Amigas going 2-for-2 which brought their total wins to eight.

LEIGH GASES

Man Amigas' Keolani Rios connects with pitch during one of their games in the NMI Softball Association Women's League 2024 at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Softball Field.

The skies above Susupe cleared long enough for all games to finish with Man Amigas first pummeling Dirty Diamonds, 14-3.

Man Amigas ace Evita Maratita held down the Dirty Diamonds in the first three innings, with her only blemish to her ERA in the fourth inning when she gave up three back-to-back runs. Rachel Salalila, Lizann Deleon Guerrero, and Mo Sablan scored to tie the game up, 3-3.

But it was only a matter of time until the Man Amigas' offense exploded—which it did in the fourth inning. Six runs scored to put them up, 9-3, and they eventually

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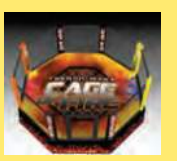
Action-packed Cage of Fire event this Saturday

LEIGH GASES

Trench Tech Purebred Purebred Promotions' Cuki Alvarez said "Cage of Fire" "is the first time in almost six years that we are finally using the octagon again and having MMA matches."

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In the words of Michael Buffer, "let's get ready to rumble" this Saturday, Dec. 15, as fighters take to the octagon in the much-anticipated return of the "Cage of Fire" kickboxing, combat grappling, and mixed martial arts competition at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse.



The event starts at 5pm and features 21 action-packed bouts.

There are 11 fights in the early prelims of three two-minute rounds. The fight card is as follows:

The 101-110 lbs. super atomweight includes Tano Camacho (GuamMuayThai) vs. Aiden Nekaifes (TrenchTech)—kickboxing; and Skylee Mesa (GuamMuayThai) vs. Beckiy "Kameame" Ha (TrenchTech)—kickboxing.

In the 111-120 lbs. atomweight, it's Gable De Chavez (GuamMuayThai) vs. Phil "Prime Time" Gregorio (TrenchTech)—boxing; and Dee "Bumble Bee" Ogo (DreeTeam) vs. Keith Aldan (TrenchTech)—kickboxing.

The 121-130 lbs. flyweight features Junene Cabe (GuamMuayThai) vs. Gratchen Pintor (MCAMMA/PRIMEVIL)—kickboxing; Heartly Liwy (Tå'ya Team) vs. Jommy Tabule (TrenchTech)—Kickboxing; Aldric Valera (GuamMuayThai) vs John Lloyd Dela Cruz (Trench Tech)—kickboxing; and

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